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- Excalibur
- Ka-Zar
- Steve Skroce
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- Rob Liefeld
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MARVEL VISION #15
MARCH 1997

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& THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

BILL ROSEMANN
HERMIE (THE ELF THAT WANTED
TO BE A DENTIST)

NANCYANN VOLPE
ONE OF THE GOOD CHILDREN

DEB BRUST
DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY TIM'S
REINDEER GAMES

BOB HARRAS
THE BURGERMEISTER

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THE THREE WISE MEN
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DAVID SCHREFF
PRESIDENT, MARVEL COMICS

IT'S TWO WEEKS BEFORE THANKSGIVING AS I WRITE THIS EDITORIAL. THERE IS SO MUCH THAT I NEED TO COVER THAT THIS SPACE ALMOST SEEMS TOO SMALL, BUT,I'LL TRY.

TO START, THE FIRST ANNUAL MARVEL MARK GRUENWALD HALLOWEEN BASH WAS A BIG SUCCESS! TWO DAYS BEFORE THIS VERY FUN PARTY I WAS "VOLUNTEERED" TO BE THE HOST, FILLING THE SHOES OF THE GRUMEISTER HIMSELF. THE PRESSURE WAS ENORMOUS, BUT MARVEL ASSEMBLED AND A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL. WE WERE ESPECIALLY HONORED BY CATHERINE GRUENWALD'S PRESENCE. BE SURE TO CHECK OUT THE SPREAD ON THE PARTY ON PAGE 22 AND 23 AND DIG MY "CAPWOLF" COSTUME BELOW.

I TOOK A LOT OF HEAT FROM A LOT OF PEOPLE ABOUT THE COVER TO ISSUE #11. "YA GOT ANDY KUBERT TO DRAW KA-ZAR BUT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE ISSUE ABOUT THE BOOK ITSELF..." THAT'S BECAUSE NONE OF THE FINAL DETAILS HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON. I KNEW ANDY WAS REALLY EAGER TO DRAW KA-ZAR, SO WHAT WAS I GONNA SAY,"NO," YEAH, RIGHT. WELL, THIS ISSUE HAS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR: THE FIRST INTERVIEW WITH ANDY, MARK WAID AND EDITOR MATT IDELSON.

ISSUE #7 HAD AN ARTICLE ON AN ARTIST WHO I THINK IS FAST BECOMING A MODERN INFLUENCE ON A LOT OF YOUNG CREATORS, CARLOS PACHECO. IN THIS ISSUE, WE REALLY GET TO KNOW WHAT IS ON THIS FABULOUS ARTIST'S MIND AS HE TAKES OVER THE PENCILING DUTIES ON X-MEN. HE'S ALSO JOINED BY HIS PARTNER IN CRIME, ART THIBERT.

I'D ALSO LIKE TO WISH JIM BRENNAN AND DESIGNER CHRIS CARROLL ALL THE BEST AS THEY MOVE ON TO OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE MARVEL. JIM WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING ME BACK TO MARVEL TO START VISION. AND TO PUT A NAME TO THE WORK, CHRIS WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DESIGNING ALL OF THE BEAST FILES AND DAILY BUGLE PRIOR TO ISSUE #14. HE WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JEFF MATSUDA, JOE MADUREIRA AND ANGEL MEDINA ARTICLES. WE'LL ALL MISS CHRIS. GOOD LUCK!

FINALLY, HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL YOU LOYAL VISION FANS.
YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

I'M DONE.

TIM TUOHY

TIM'S BOX OF USELESS INFORMATION #1.
DESPITE WHAT MR. OWL SAYS, IT TAKES 437 LICKS TO GET TO THE TOOTSIE ROLL CENTER OF A TOOTSIE POP!

MARVEL VISION™ Vol. 1, No. 15 March 1997. Published by MARVEL COMICS, David Schreff, President, Shirrel Rhoades, Executive VP Publishing, Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, NY 10016. APPLICATION TO MAIL AT SECOND CLASS POSTAGE IS PENDING AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly.
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POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MARVEL VISION, c/o MARVEL DIRECT MARKETING INC./SUBSCRIPTION DEPT., P.O. BOX 1979, DANBURY, CT 06813-1979. TELEPHONE # (203) 743-5331. Printed in Canada.

VISION #15

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34) Rob Liefeld returns to the pages of VISION to talk about the newest Heroes Reborn surprise: a titanic clash between the Hulk and the Avengers.
40) It's VISION Video Game time. This time our intrepid game-head Tom Rolston reviews MARVEL SUPER HEROES: WAR OF THE GEMS.
42) Painters Julie Bell and her husband, the legendary Boris Vallejo give VISION a peek at their all-new card set: MARVEL MASTERPIECES.

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FEATURE ARTICLES

8) If you haven't been reading EXCALIBUR then you should start! Writer Ben Raab and Editor Matt Idelson talk about England's Mutant team and new art duo of Salvador Larocca and Scott Koblish.
11) The Lord of the Savage Land is back. Writer Mark Waid and penciler Andy Kubert go native on Marvel's original wild man.
24) AMAZING SPIDER-MAN artist, Steve Skroce talks about his beginnings at Marvel in Part 1 of this two part interview.

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INSIGHTS

TIMM2E,

It is strangely appropriate that issue #13 would come out just before Halloween. Anyway, I just wanted to write in and make a suggestion or two. In issue #1 (I think) you did a special describing the characters of X-Nation. Let's see the same for The THUNDERBOLTS. Show us some artist sketches of the creation of these characters. It is always exciting to see how a character came about.

I guess that's it.

Marvelously,

Jeremy
JezzJedi@aol.com

No sketches this time but how about Kurt Busiek's comments that appeared last month. They were pretty exciting.

Dear INSIGHTS,

First off, I'd like to say that y'all have produced one excellent magazine over the past year. The interviews, Time Slip, Beast Files, and the Visionary letters have been really fascinating.

There are several rumors going around about the 1997 production line. I've heard that there will be new titles like, KA-ZAR, SENTINELS, and another X-Title. Is there any truth to these, or are they only rumors? I collect all of the X-Titles, Heroes Reborn books, and the 2099 title, so I find this to be disturbing. Over the past year the Marvel line has decreased quite a bit and is now about double. Don't get me wrong, you put out one heck of a line, but what about some new ideas? The Marvel Universe just lost at least one third of its heroes; there has got to be a few new ideas that don't just mirror old ones.

Now I have a few questions:

1) Where did Mark Waid go? He was on X-MEN, CAPTAIN AMERICA, and THE AVENGERS. He was doing such a great job. What happened?

2) With Xavier gone, will Cyclops and the rest of the X-Men re-open the school? I think that is exactly what Cyclops would do in order to make sure that they're better prepared for the future.

3) Will we ever see the Shadow King again?

4) Will we see any new additions to the Heroes Reborn Universe? STRANGE TALES perhaps or AMAZING FANTASY would be excellent additions.

5) And finally, if Apocalypse is the most powerful villain there is, why does he just confront the X-Men? You'd think that En Sabah Nur wouldn't just limit himself to attacking mutant super heroes.

Tell Rob Liefeld thanks for making me into one of the coolest characters of all. Keep up the good work and have a nice day.

Nate Dayspring
480 Colony Drive
Whiteland, IN 46184

Well, Nate, I hope your techno-organic virus isn't keeping you down! Ha Ha. Darn it, Jim. I'm an editor, not a comedian. Seriously though, KA-ZAR is very much a reality. Check out the feature elsewhere in this issue. I haven't heard anything about SENTINELS, but I do know about the POWER CORP. That story will have to wait for a future issue.
As for your questions:

1) Mark took a break but is now back writing KA-ZAR.

2) With the X-Men being outlaws following the ONSLAUGHT affair, I doubt the school will be reopened.

3) We always get to see one character or another again; it just depends on the right story.

4) No, but according to Rob Liefeld, we will see some new characters in that universe.

5) He's kinda obsessive that way.

Dear INSIGHTS,

During the last two years, I've been going to the bookstore on a regular basis to check and see if a new Marvel novel has been displayed in the science fiction/ fantasy section of the store. Whenever I found a new Marvel novel on sale, I bought a copy, took it home, and read it. Just about all these novels have been well written and they capture the fun and excitement of the Marvel Universe pretty well. There's no doubt about it. If I read a SPIDER-MAN novel, for example, I don't feel like it's a story which is too loosely based on previously published comic book stories. It's a novel about the real hero period.

It's great to see that both Marvel and the Berkley Publishing Group are working closely together so that the novels reflect the values and ideals that have made the Marvel Heroes so popular for over three decades. However, what I am surprised to see is that Marvel VISION has not done any articles on these novels, or has interviewed any of the talented writers who are working on them. That's not good. These writers have done an outstanding job and been faithful to the characters. It's only fair to give credit where credit is due. Take the time to do a story on the Marvel novels; get some insight from the writers who worked hard on them! Please!

Robert Moraes
10214 E. Stoney Vista Dr.
Sun Lakes, AZ 85248

We at Marvel are glad that some of our readers have taken the next step in following our characters' adventures. The novels are an exciting addition to the mythos of these heroes. As another reader pointed out in a past letter that wasn't printed, Marvel has had previous runs with the novelization of our heroes. You also bring up a good point that these are all-new adventures. I was very disappointed when the "Aliens" novel series turned out to be just an adaptation of Dark Horse's ALIENS comics.

Although VISION has no plans to feature these in the future, let this letter serve as a notice to check out your local bookstores for the Marvel Novels and enjoy.

Dear INSIGHTS,

Now, I had read comics as a kid, but then I gradually tapered off as I discovered girls and rock and roll. Later, in 1984 or so, I rediscovered the fun of comics. I was collecting all over again.

Then, in 1992, after being inundated with numerous die-cut-

chromium-alternate-art-autographed-anniversary editions with fold-out covers, I gave it up. It had become so expensive and obsessive, it was no longer fun for me.

Now, in 1996, a friend mentions this Heroes Reborn line of books to me. At first, I was very skeptical. Could Marvel honestly try to wipe the slate clean for these great characters? And more importantly, could they find the talent necessary to create the quality stories and art that readers would demand?

I though it might boost a few sales. Now, and don't get me wrong, there is nothing at all wrong with high sales; just give the readers quality stories with the characters they love and you'll sell all the books you can print. But, I didn't want to see a continuation of a trend that I found very irritating a while back. And that was characters with too many titles (Spider-Man & X-Men). Or those mega-crossovers with flimsy plots. Or books with lame characters and badly engineered plots in other books that you were forced to read if you wanted to understand the current event presented in your favorite comic.

You see, I was never a fan of the X-Men, or Cable, or the New Mutants, or X-Force, or any of the other X-Folks. I feel that Marvel was snubbing their flagship titles so that the spotlight could fall on the X-Books. Sure they had some good characters, but they were definitely part of Marvel's second string, along with Daredevil and Dr. Strange.

And now, we get to Heroes Reborn. When I heard that Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld were involved, and more importantly, that these books would be contemporary re-tellings of these characters' origins, I decided to try them out. Well, I have followed these four titles for the last six weeks and I must say that they are leagues beyond what I had expected. They are really great books. My local comics dealer says that I am one of the many ex-customers to use this as an opportunity to begin reading comics again. I have heard, though, that Marvel only intends to run these titles for only one year. After which such time, they will be returned to regular status quo. Please, do not let this happen!

I will not buy any more of these titles if they are to be re-integrated into the old Marvel Universe. Nor will many of these returning readers. The X-Universe is too convoluted, confusing, costly, and most of all, too crowded.

My vote is yup to the Heroes Reborn and a big nope to putting them back into the Marvel Universe. The regular one that is.

James Gross
2704 Ash St.
Carleton, MI 48117

Whew. I think that this is a first. It just goes to show you that people have different opinions about similar subjects. Although I do agree with James that Heroes Reborn has been an exciting time for all the parties involved and by that I mean: Marvel, Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Whilce Portacio, Scott Lobdell, Jeph Loeb, Scott Williams et al., and of course all of the fans out there, I want them back in the Marvel Universe. I miss the Torch frying Spidey's web line and other such goofiness. But that's my opinion. What's yours?

And now, even another opinion.

Dear INSIGHTS,

As one of the few to speak out against your deal with Lee and Liefeld, it seems only fair to give my opinions on these books after their publication. I am writing these views as each title is released, so this letter will be four weeks in the making.

First up, THE FANTASTIC FOUR. This book was very good, well written, fast paced without being too busy. Supporting characters were introduced along with sub-plots and the foreshadowing will hopefully lead to events to come. The art in the new release was, as always with Jim Lee, excellent. I have enjoyed this new title. Thank you.

Next, CAPTAIN AMERICA. Part of me really wanted to like this book. Another part of me hated it without seeing it. Well, I've seen it now and I must say in all honesty that I am disappointed with this book. It's not that the book is terrible, it's just that it's BLAH. The plot is dull and the scripting is adequate. Never having liked Mr. Liefeld's pencils in the past, I do not feel it fair to comment on the art other than to say that the layouts were OK. All in all, I must say that I can't even get angry over this book. There isn't enough to it, good or bad, to bring out much of a response.

IRON MAN, I don't know about. Maybe it's the major change or perhaps the supporting cast. It could be the attitude. It could be all of the above. The plot was straightforward enough, although there is more psychological spam than I care for. The art is OK, sometimes it's too dark, a reflection of mood? Many of the characters look alike and must be watched carefully to figure out who they are. I do like the sub-plot connecting the major techno-wizards of the Lee/Liefeld universe. To get right down to it, this is not a title I would continue to buy, unless some changes are made. One last thing, all the duplicate characters are getting on my nerves. Recognition is nice, but these pale by comparison.

Finally, THE AVENGERS was one of my favorite books before the present incarnation. The new Swordsman is terrible. The characterizations in general are quite poor, but then so was the art. I didn't like Hellcat, Hawkeye, or The Scarlet Witch. I'm not sure how I feel about this title; again I think I am forced to use the word disappointed, but not surprised about this feeling.

All in all, I must say that your plan to breathe new life into these books has failed. An effort made, but nonetheless a hollow one. Sorry it didn't work out.

Robert Shoals
997 Richmond Ct, SC
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

We're sorry that they didn't meet your expectations, Robert. I do hope you will give them another chance; after all, Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was Marvel.

Dear INSIGHTS,

Congratulations on passing the year mark. I think that MARVEL AGE has a worthy successor at last. It's good to see that the background visuals for the articles are becoming a little more restrained in their balance against the text. You're certainly not the worst offenders in this department. I'm a great believer in not using

every tool for every job, but not every designer seems to agree with me. Oh well.

Rob Kirby
2 Bramshott CL
London Rd.
Hitchin, Herts
England SG4 9EP

Sorry to have edited your letter so severely, Rob. You wrote in with some comments and additional information on the UK titles that were featured in VISION's first installment of "Greatest Comics Never Seen." If anyone would like a copy of his extensive list, send a self-addressed stamped envelope and I'll be sure to pass it along.

Dear INSIGHTS,

I'm writing in response to the offer of a No-Prize for the correct name and picture of the FAT ALBERT character referred to in issue #12. If I remember correctly, his name was Weird Ronald. Included is a photocopy of the Fat Albert crew with him circled. I hope I'm right. I've hunted the elusive No-Prize for years. Keep up the good work on the mag.

NO-PRIZE WINNER
Bill Meechan
313 E. 2nd St.
Dover, OH 44622

Good show, Bill. That's two No-Prizes in two months. What have I begun?

Dear INSIGHTS,

I have noticed a lot of older characters making a comeback. Usually it was only Luke Cage and Man-Thing making these random appearances. Now I see a lot of my favorites are starting to appear once more. Iron Fist's recent limited series was good and I had heard rumors of working him back into the Marvel Universe. I was thrilled to see that my favorite character from my comic collecting beginnings was coming back, Howard the Duck. Now I see that the Micronauts and Devil Dinosaur will also be making an appearance. I think an appearance by Rom in the last issues of NEW WARRIORS would have been cool.

I see the trends of the '70s classics coming back, not just in comics, but in everyday life. I think Marvel should take advantage of the nostalgia and create a new monthly anthology to bring these classic characters back into our lives and to introduce them to a new generation of comic fans. You should call it Marvel Classic Showcase and it could have all the old popular characters written and drawn by some of today's up-and-coming new talents.

Just an idea.

Mark Trollinger
380 Old Concord Rd.
Smyrna, GA 30082

I remember those characters too and boy, did I enjoy them. Yes, some of those wonderful '70s creations are coming back in the strangest of places. Just look for Shang-Chi's appearance in X-MEN. The Micronauts team, though, was woefully small. Due to legal limitations Marvel could only use the characters that Marvel created for the book: Arcturus Rann, Princess Mari and the lovable Bug, who's also going to be starring in his own one-shot.

Dear INSIGHTS,

You know, I have a very strong feeling something big is gonna happen to all our favorites. I can feel it! Let's look at the clues. Here they are listed so everyone can see them as well:

1) It seems MARVEL & DC are starting a very exciting tradition together. This tradition crosses their respective universes at the start of the fall (more or less around Sept. or Oct.). Last year it was the big first one, this year it's ALL ACCESS. You mentioned in INSIGHTS in issue #12 (happy birthday by the way) that we'd be returning to that wonderful AMALGAM reality in '97.

2) I think it was the interview with Bob Harras that we heard him say that in a year Dr. Strange would travel to the "pocket universe" to get our heroes back because of some urgent mission at that time. You have clearly explained that this Rob/Jim universe is just temporary (thank the good STAN) and in Jim Lee's interview he states that it's only going on for 12 issues.

3) The whole Pocket Universe thing started from Onslaught, who was using Franklin's powers and X-MAN's as well. These two, in a desperate attempt to save our heroes, created this pocket universe and in the process had to warp reality to do so.

4) Recently we were informed that it was some reality-warping events that alerted the two brothers (in MARVEL VERSUS DC) about each other—could that have been the AGE OF APOCALYPSE and ZERO HOUR/CRISIS, or maybe even THE INFINITY SAGA or SECRET WARS?

5) In VISION #12 Billy Tucci said he wanted to do the "Unitus Project" involving the Crusade Universe and possibly the Marvel and Image universes in which they work together to save the comics industry.

6) Coincidentally, in FANTASTIC FOUR #415 page 21, panel 2, Onslaught is playing an AMALGAM OVERPOWER card game with Franklin. The pictures and names of Darkclaw & Super Soldier (he's called Super Patriot) were shown, kinda. Let's note that Onslaught, the most powerful telepath, wants to show Franklin these cards.

7) Characters from DARK HORSE, IMAGE, TOPPS, TOP COW, CRUSADE, DC, MARVEL and just about everybody under the sun are crossing over a lot all of a sudden. I only get into MARVEL & DC but it's easy to notice this.

All this adds up to something in my mind— $$$$$$$$. I think that because of so many universe changing events, the walls between realities are breaking down and that's why Dr. Strange is gonna get our heroes help. Because we are going to have the BIGGEST crossover ever seen between ALL companies next fall!!!!!!!!!!

Well, what do you think, am I just reading into it or have I just blown the lid off the biggest upcoming EVENT ever? Let me know, please!

Until a certain bald guy goes nuts and attacks the Marvel Universe (umm, never mind) MAKE MINE MARVEL!

Scott Bryan
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In the brilliant words of a good friend named Butt Head: Uh Huh Huh Uh Huh Huh. No.

TIMM2E,

I want to thank Marvel for their new "Essential" black-and-white collections. I am especially looking forward to the Lee and Ditko Spider-Man collection in December.

Please consider reprinting Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's run on the Fantastic Four in one or more of these types of books. I cannot think of any Marvel comics more "essential" than these classic issues.

Thanks,
Brian Ross /Ssorlb

Ah, there's a reason they're called "classics."

Dear INSIGHTS

VISION rocks!!!! Since it came out I even stopped buying WIZARD because it isn't as good. Is there any chance that one of the ten new titles Marvel is putting out at the end of 1996 could be a new Darkhawk series? The old series ended in a way that would make it easy to bring him back, and he was always a pretty cool character.

The two Jim Lee titles in Heroes Reborn, IRON MAN and the FANTASTIC FOUR, are awesome!!! He doesn't seem to have redone their origins as much as he has just fit things together and made it seem more believable. As for the Rob Liefeld titles, CAPTAIN AMERICA and the AVENGERS, I think that they could be a lot better (turning Bucky into a girl should be in Marvel's Silliest Moments). By the way any chance of a Joe Maduriera Time Slip? Time Slip rocks!!!

Rob Fishbook
2338 McDonald Ave.
Prince Albert, Sask. CAN.
HDDR.FISH@orion.sk.sympatico.ca

Joe Mad is really busy. I mean really busy, so don't hold your breath but look forward to some artists whose work hasn't graced any Marvel pages in a while. I was very proud to have BONE's creator, Jeff Smith, contribute his rendition of the Silver Surfer. I really dig BONE.

Tim,

I love your magazine! It has great articles, great updates on what's happening, and it has excellent departments. The two departments that I really love are the Daily Bugle and Marvel Chronicles. It is fun to see the early stages of the Marvel Universe before it became the ultimate universe that it is today.

Right now you are probably talking to the original Marvel Zombie. But if I could only read your competition's books, it would be Batman. I loved the Spider-Man/Batman team-up of last year. I am trying to find a copy of Punisher/Batman as we speak, and I am looking forward to Daredevil/Batman in January. The one thing I don't get is WHY ARE THEY SO EXPENSIVE? I mean Marvel vs. DC, was only $3.95, the Amalgams were only $1.95, so why are these books that I just mentioned $5.95? I still buy them anyway, but help clue me in here.

Thanks and by the way, Make Mine Marvel!

Patrick Martin
10 Brown Ave.
Johnston, RI 02919
KCPTMartin@AOL.COM

Those books that you mention costing $5.95 were actually bookshelf comics. They are squarebound and have more pages, hence the higher cost.

Dear INSIGHTS,

I love Marvel VISION—great layout, lots of info (though I'd like to see more toy previews as well).

I've got one quesion: in "Remember Gwen," Pat Jankiewicz says Gwen died from being hurled off the "George Washington Bridge". Since when did the bridge change??? It's always been the Brooklyn Bridge! The first time I saw a switch was in Les Daniels' beautiful "Marvel Comics" hardcover book. Ever since, I've seen the GWB name replacing what are clearly images of the beloved Brooklyn Bridge! There's even a clear profile of it at the end of PP:SM #75. Please help! Thanks!

Mike Fichera
spidey@magpage.com
Mike's Custom Action Figure Page
http://www.magpage.com/~spidey/FIGURES/figs.html
(come see custom figures of Harry, Gwen, Tarantula, JJJ, and more!)

Finally, some cool Marvel intriguing trivia. The incident you mention which is one of Marvel's most famous moments is not without its own mysterious origin.

No matter how you look at it, the bridge that's drawn is the Brooklyn Bridge. The writer, however, wanted it to be the George Washington Bridge since Norman knew that our first president was Peter's favorite historical character. The art came in, the different bridge wasn't noticed and out it went. Later on, in retro editing efforts, the bridge was indeed referred to as the Brooklyn Bridge.

Thanks for the Letters:
William Carlisle, David Hodum Brendan Walsh, Thomas Keno Richard Fisher, Christopher Vanette, Magalie Thibault, Antonio Rene Ervin, Pierce Askegren, Jon Mundy, John Miller, Justin Melbourne, Mike Morrell, Dennis Cooper and Palmer Lee Berry.

E-Mails came in from:
TSherrie@gnn.com
(Timothy R. Sherrie)
dlh9675@garnet.acns.fsu.ed
(Dan Harvell) and
9601437H@STUDENT.TP.AC.SG
(Mohamed Nazri B Yusop)

Finally, a very sincere and heartfelt letter about Mark Gruenwald was received from Michael Miller
Thank you.

Write to Marvel VISION Insights
c/o Marvel Comics
387 Park Avenue South
New York NY 10016.
Or E-Mail to: TIMM 2E@ aol.com
Addresses will be withheld at the writer's request.

Some legends claim that the Lady of the Lake handed a magical blade to a great and powerful monarch to aid him in his quest. Others have it that the sword was pulled from within a mystic stony hearth by a young boy destined to be king. Regardless of its origins, the sacred blade of King Arthur disappeared following his death, never to be seen again. But presently, Marvel's version of this legendary icon has EXCALIBUR (the book, not the sword) falling into the ready hands of Editor Matt Idelson. The rest is destined to be history.

"The thing with this title is that you can't try to redo what has been done before simply because the creative teams that worked on this book in the past did their jobs so well. What we are going to do is take this team in a different direction altogether and make every story as memorable as possible." We, in this case, refers to the new EXCALIBUR creative team of Writer Ben Raab, Artist Salvador Larocca, and Inker Scott Koblish. Idelson: "Ben has a real sense of character; this will help develop the EXCALIBUR lineup like never before. He knows these characters inside out and also has a writing style that serves the X-books very well. As for Salvador and Scott, their art is just bursting with energy and that's going to work very nicely with the type of adventures we'll be sending this team on."

eXcalibur

THE CRUSADE CONTINUES

by Robert Piotrowski

Past creative teams have left some pretty impressive shoes to fill here, but the current talent lineup knows the score and they're prepared to grand slam this title into the stratosphere. Raab: "Talents like Chris Claremont, Alan Davis and Warren Ellis left us with these wonderful characters. Our job now is to present readers with new stories that will take them even further."

Excalibur was originally forged following the presumed death of Xavier's troop during THE FALL OF THE MUTANTS storyline (UNCANNY X-MEN #'s 225-227). Back then, Kurt Wagner and company had a simple goal: continue to further Xavier's dream in the wake of their comrades' passing. Over the years, however, this premise was altered somewhat and the team drifted away from the rest of the X-family to successfully thrive within their own niche in the Marvel Universe, namely Great Britain. Now, beginning with issue #107, EXCALIBUR will be getting back to their roots as well as begin touching base with their X-Men counterparts in the States once more.

"We're going to have Excalibur take a more active role in the Marvel Universe," reports Raab. "And since four members of this team are former X-Men, they will naturally drift into X-continuity once in a while. Certainly more than they have in the past."

Until then, these modern day mutant crusaders will also be busy restructuring their team incentive. "With Professor X gone [Thanks to the aftermath of the Onslaught incident.—Tim], Kurt will take it upon himself to give back a little of what Xavier taught him; although mutants are different, even freaks on some levels, they can still make a positive contribution to society on a large scale. As a result, Excalibur will begin training other mutants in using their powers. But these are not the X-Men. This group is radically different even in the fact that they have members like Captain Britain and Pete Wisdom. That alone will affect the way they handle every new challenge that comes their way as well as train those that come to them for aid."

Editor Idelson is adamant about the gradual return to X-basics for this group and confirms that in the near future, Excalibur will begin constructing their very own Cerebro unit in order to facilitate the gathering and well-being of other mutants around the world. "The Marvel Universe is getting smaller and more dangerous for Homo superiors. It's almost at the point where finding other mutants has become key to the survival of the entire race as opposed to just personal safety."

That said and done, don't expect the boys and girls of Muir Island to go swinging over to the States every time there's an emergency. "Regardless of what is going on, it wouldn't make much sense to just have the team jet over to New York every time the X-Men are in trouble. The members of Excalibur are happy exactly where they are and that's why they've all stayed on Muir Island this long. They are a family in and of themselves. There is, however, quite a bit of travel in store for them. But that'll take them a lot farther than America!"

The team will also be getting smaller with emphasis being placed on its core members. In this case though, out of sight does not necessarily mean completely out of continuity. According to Raab, another goal will be to continue keeping those characters that may be out of the spotlight for the moment fresh in readers' minds. "Because some individuals will be exploring other interests, we'll be sure to make all the characters just as interesting off panel as they are on. There is going to be a lot going on."

Clearly, things around the Excalibur complex may never be the same again. But what's that really mean for the members of everybody's favorite bundle of British-based buccaneers? Here are a couple of hints straight from Editor Matt Idelson's secret stash of stuff to come. (Note: The following information was obtained only after implementing the aid of hypnotic mind probes.)

NIGHTCRAWLER: "As team leader, Kurt will begin to question how he can continue to carry out Professor X's dream. He'll find himself in a position that demands that he keep up the pep in the team as well as keep everybody alive at the same time. There will still be a lightness to his character but upcoming issues will pose a definite struggle for him."

MEGGAN: "Lately she has become a very interesting person. She's much more independent now and there will be an intriguing development in her romantic life in the near future. There will also be some interesting changes in the way that Meggan relates to some of the other members of her team."

CAPTAIN BRITAIN: "Brian's been on this tightrope as of late, deciding whether or not to be a super hero or a scientist. Soon he will be forced to make a choice. The fact that he is Psylocke's brother will also weigh heavily on Brian in the near future."

SHADOWCAT: "Kitty will remain, in many ways, the backbone of this team. She has an interesting relationship with Colossus that needs to be explored as well as her ongoing romance with Pete Wisdom."

PETE WISDOM: "He belongs on this team about as much as he belongs on an episode of 'Barney'. But for some reason he stays all the same. Pete will probably never change simply because he is who he is. The question that needs to be addressed is whether or not he's sticking around for Kitty or because he's too cynical to admit that he likes what the team is doing."

(For those getting their star-crossed spandex in a knot, rest assured that Writer Ben Raab has no intention of breaking up the Pryde and Wisdom duo—for the time being anyway. However, he admits that it will prove "very interesting to see Pete [Wisdom] react when he sees Kitty in her old X-Man role.")

WOLFSBANE: "Rhane has grown up a lot. In a short while she will be faced with a tragedy that will cause her to mature even more, as well as remind readers of just how young she is."

AMANDA SEFTON: "Amanda will be taking a short leave of absence around issue #108 but there will definitely be some major things going on with her. It'll be mostly family related and quite emotional. That's all I can say without giving it all away."

DOUGLOCK: "Under Warren Ellis, Douglock began a journey towards humanity and we will continue exploring that aspect of his character. He will also be a key player in the search for a cure for the Legacy Virus later on in the year."

MOIRA: "As the first human to have the Legacy Virus, Moira will soon begin to feel the effects of this horrible disease."

COLOSSUS: "Peter's been through a lot in a lot the past few months. Although he is not the youngest member of Excalibur, he still has some maturing to do and we'll be seeing his slow progression towards that. Other than that, the rest is top secret."

According to Idelson, "The overall feel of this book will be something along the lines of the storytelling structure in UNCANNY X-MEN #'s 111 to 123." Raab confirms: "I remember when I was six years old opening up UNCANNY X-MEN #107 and seeing the splash page depicting the X-Men having just been transported by Phoenix into the Shi'ar world and the look of wonder and horror and shock on their faces. That's what good comic books are all about. That's what we'll be trying to capture."

So, as they gather in a scene reminiscent of a meeting between Arthur and his knights before their round table (except their desks are square, varnished, and come complete with computer consoles), this book's creative team shall discuss many a new thing. They will brood over details, plan intricate strategies, and pour over classic tomes for inspiration. And in the end, the legend of EXCALIBUR (the comic book, not the sword) shall live on. And Xavier's dream and Arthur's ancient legacy will be served.

"King Arthur had a dream, too. Of a world where might served right, instead of subjugating it. His knights of the round table were the agents of that dream...and his sword...the symbol of it. Excalibur represented hope. It was light in the darkness of fear and ignorance and hate."

—Rachel Summers

Born to be WILD?

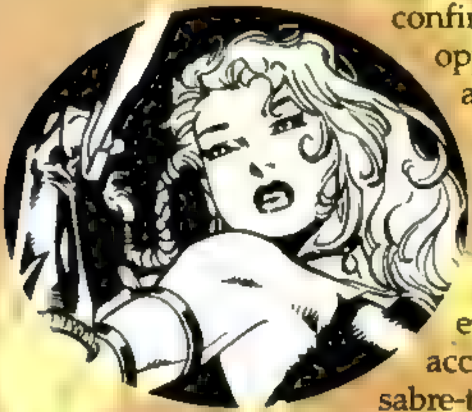
by Rob Piotrowski

Hungry for high flying adventure? Then this is one series you'll really sink your teeth into.

Start with a deserted tropical paradise. Toss in true love. Combine with a classic down-to-earth hero who finds himself caught between the call of the wild and the modern temptations of a civilized world. Mix with a few hundred gallons of the freshest air on the planet and garnish with a faithful companion. Flavor to taste with out-of-sight writing, art, and design. Print and serve. Now if that's not a sure fire recipe for a comic book classic, just call me Maa-Gor, Lord of the Ape Men!

Having made his first appearance in X-MEN #10 more than 30 years ago, Ka-Zar the savage will be the focus of a new ongoing series from writer Mark Waid and artist Andy Kubert starting in March. And although this isn't the wild man's first solo series, KAZAR is definitely a different approach to exploring the limits and expectations of a modern day hero.

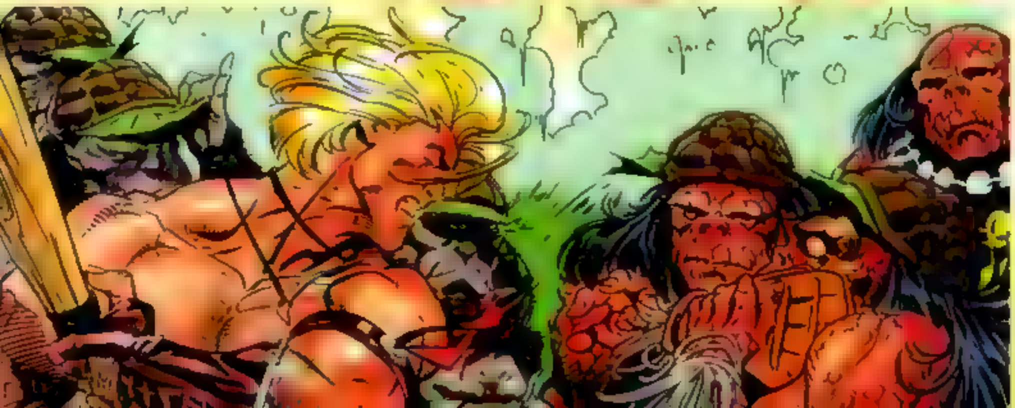
Even way back in '65, Ka-Zar's unique origin made fans stand up and take notice. For those too young to have experienced it firsthand, legend has it that young Ka-Zar (then known as Lord Kevin Plunder) was taken to a secret Savage Land in the Antarctic by his father, a renowned scientist who had discovered the area while conducting research. When his dad fell victim to a local band of tribesmen, Kevin was left to fend for himself among hordes of prehistoric plants and animals. Miraculously, he survived and after growing to adulthood within the confines of this hidden paradise, refused to leave even when the opportunity presented itself. "Although he inherited his father's fortune a long time ago," reports Editor Matt Idelson, "Ka-Zar chose the civilized nature of the Savage Land over the savage nature of civilization: the money, the power, and the games. He wanted to live life as it was, just hunting and surviving." So he did, happily entertaining numerous escapades accompanied by his faithful sabre-toothed tiger Zabu and wife Shanna (the She-Devil), who also committed herself to a life on the 'wild side'.



As of late however, things have changed. Big time. Waid: "Even though he has developed the lawlessness that jungle life will give you, Ka-Zar also remembers Big Macs and baseball and the million other trappings of the modern world from his early years. Currently, he is beginning to grow more and more nostalgic for those comforts." As a result, after traveling to New York to find out who is trying to kill him, Ka-Zar will ponder leaving the Savage Land for good. Soon after, he will become a permanent fixture in the Big Apple. "Coming back into civilization is a very logical development for this character," says Waid. "And because of the fact that he is not a mutant, the general public will embrace him. They will even go as far as to welcome him in the wake of the death of their heroes." But the big move into the modern world will not solve Kevin Plunder's problems. According to Idelson, it will only feed the inner turmoil that will be the focus of the series. "Ka-Zar will desperately try to find a balance between his two worlds. But it will not be easy."

As well as causing unending inner hardship, Ka-Zar's new direction will also put some major strains on his long-lived relationship with wife Shanna. Says Waid, "What makes Ka-Zar and Shanna interesting as a couple is that their career paths have changed. When they first met, they both loved the Savage Land and hated civilization. Their life goal was to get back to nature. But to their horror they will now find that while Shanna has delved deeper into nature, Ka-Zar has been harboring an appreciation for running water and other such luxuries."

So what's in store for these loin-clothed lovebirds? According to Waid, the couple that swings (from trees that is) together, stays together. "As far as I'm concerned, Shanna and Ka-Zar are still very much in love. Their banter and the ways in which they play off one another will be the heart of this series."



A temporary solution to their conflict will come in the form of appropriate housing facilities. Idelson: "After the initial three issue arc, the plan is to have them settle into a couple of floors of the Plaza Hotel with some of their

dinosaur pals." That way, Shanna can enjoy the freedom of the wild (to a certain extent) and Ka-Zar can attend to his duties and still make it home in time to help her hunt down some din-din.

In addition to accommodating his wife, Ka-Zar will also have the future of his son to consider. The little tyke may be out of T-Rex range in the city, but the urban jungle boasts its own brand of predators. In between saving his own skin from corporate poachers and taking care of his family, big daddy Ka-Zar's going to have his hands full. Regardless, writer Mark Waid has a pretty good idea of how he's going to lighten things up. "Ka-Zar will get a lot of mileage out of the fact that most people think he's a savage. In public he will go along with the gag just to see what people will say in front of him. Sort of, 'Me Ka-Zar Rrrrrr'. Then behind closed doors, he and Shanna will laugh about the whole thing to no end."

Readers can also look forward to a renewal of Ka-Zar's apparel. Although one of artist Andy Kubert's biggest influences on this series is his father's work on TARZAN, he admits that the jungle patterned fashions of the early days are long gone. "We've updated Ka-Zar quite a bit. He's still going to have the loincloth type thing but it will be more suited to his new lifestyle. He will wear blue jeans underneath for the most part and Wolverine-type work boots as well. He won't have that long Conan-type hair anymore either. It'll be more sculpted."

Cool lid, hip threads, and furry animal friends to boot. Not bad for a guy who spent the last few weeks getting the Pterodactyl goop out of his hair for the big debut. But how will he fare in a Universe chock-full of flashy wall-crawlers and eye beam dispensing superstars? "Making Ka-Zar exciting visually will be done with movement," claims Kubert. "He has to be a little more animated than the heroes who can fly across the horizon."

"Ka-Zar isn't like other heroes," adds Idelson. "Living in the Savage Land has taught him to use whatever may be at hand to help him in his struggle. After fighting off scores of dinosaurs on a daily basis, he can pretty much take on anybody."

Waid concurs, stating that in many ways Kevin Plunder is similar to "Captain America, in that he is the type of individual who makes things happen. And short of doing intentional harm, Ka-Zar lives by the theory of survival of the fittest in both the modern world and in the wild."

Coincidentally, 'fit' may just be this guy's middle name. Kubert: "From a physical aspect, Ka-Zar's physique calls for a much more cut look than any other character I've worked on. His agility and fighting prowess need to be portrayed with more accents and textures because that is what a lot of his character is about."

Ultra-eager fans already got a preview of Ka-Zar and company in the six page story by the regular team of Waid, Kubert, [Inker Jesse] Delperdang, and [Colorist Joe] Rosas in December's MARVEL UNIVERSE #1. So if you missed it, be sure not to pass up the premiere issue of the KA-ZAR series. Just keep in mind that even though a deserted island with sun, giant lizards, and a whole mess of prehistoric fruit may sound like a dream, life's a whole lot sweeter when your name's not on the menu.

Weather
Variable cloudiness and much colder. High only near 30. Tonight mostly cloudy, with a chance of light snow, low 20's.

DAILY BUGLE®

IN THIS ISSUE
X-clusive Holiday hair tips with Sabretooth.

January 10, 1997 — New York's Finest Daily Newspaper — Fifty Cents

Staff Photo By Carolyn Giambalvo

HULK TAKES HOSTAGES

Impasse with government reaches critical mass

Jim Gluohy UPI

Long-running attempts by the United States government to capture the rampaging Hulk reached a critical crossroads yesterday when the Hulk captured the small Florida Keys island, Duck Key. With over 1,000 civilians now held hostage by the Hulk, government agents were forced to suspend their offensive movements while the Joint Chief of Staff considered their options. One American soldier, who spoke on condition of anonymity said that "this is the ultimate Mexican standoff. He's got 1,000 people under his thumb, and we're weighing the options." He further hinted the troops might be called upon to take extreme measures to resolve the situation. "I know for a fact that our bosses are considering going in there. The question is, do we risk the lives of a thousand people to save the remaining millions who potentially stand in the Hulk's path?"

Government officials attempted to downplay the situation. Government specialist and former liaison to the Avengers, Peter Gyrich denied that the military is planning a strike. "There is no way we will risk the life of even a single innocent in order to stop the Hulk." When we quoted the unnamed source who said otherwise, Gyrich scoffed, saying, "Obviously, somebody has seen too many movies. We will not harm a single soul, let alone a thousand people. That's out of the question!"

—CONTINUED IN INCREDIBLE HULK #451

PUNISHER BELIEVED DEAD

Mark Berino DAILY BUGLE

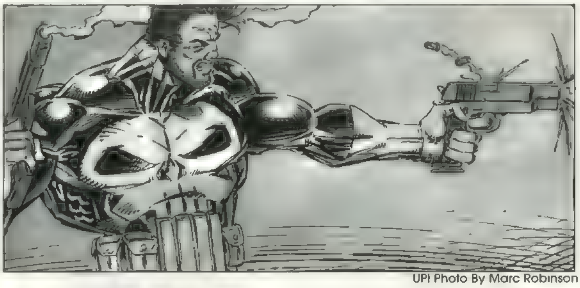
Police and forensic crews continued to comb the wreckage of what was once the headquarters of the Mutant Liberation Front in a vain attempt to locate survivors. The MLF, an illegal mutant militia group that has attempted to control rampant anti-mutant racism via the use of force was exposed when their complex exploded under mysterious circumstances last night. Believed to have been caught in the blast was the mysterious vigilante known as the Punisher.

Employing extreme and sometimes even lethal methods to stop crime, the Punisher has garnered something of a cult following over the last several years as he has waged a one-man war on criminal activity. "This is exactly the kind of thing we would have like to have prevented" said G.W. Bridge, the acting head of S.H.I.E.L.D. "Extreme, unstable individuals like the Punisher may do a small bit of good in the short term, but ultimately, their actions tend to harm rather than help the situation. This is a pretty clear-cut example of just that."

S.H.I.E.L.D. believes the Punisher was attempting to shut down the M.L.F. when the explosion occurred, and the international law-enforcement division believes the Punisher may be directly responsible for the carnage. "There is no question in my mind," said Bridge, "that the Punisher is responsible for this." While rescue efforts continued, S.H.I.E.L.D. held little hope that the Punisher survived the explosion. "I think he perished in the blast," said Bridge. "I think he went out in a blaze of glory."

—CONTINUED IN PUNISHER #17

AP Photo By Zelda Brown



UPI Photo By Marc Robinson

ROXXON OIL EXPOSED

Implicated in environmental exploitation scheme

Ralph Machochino AP

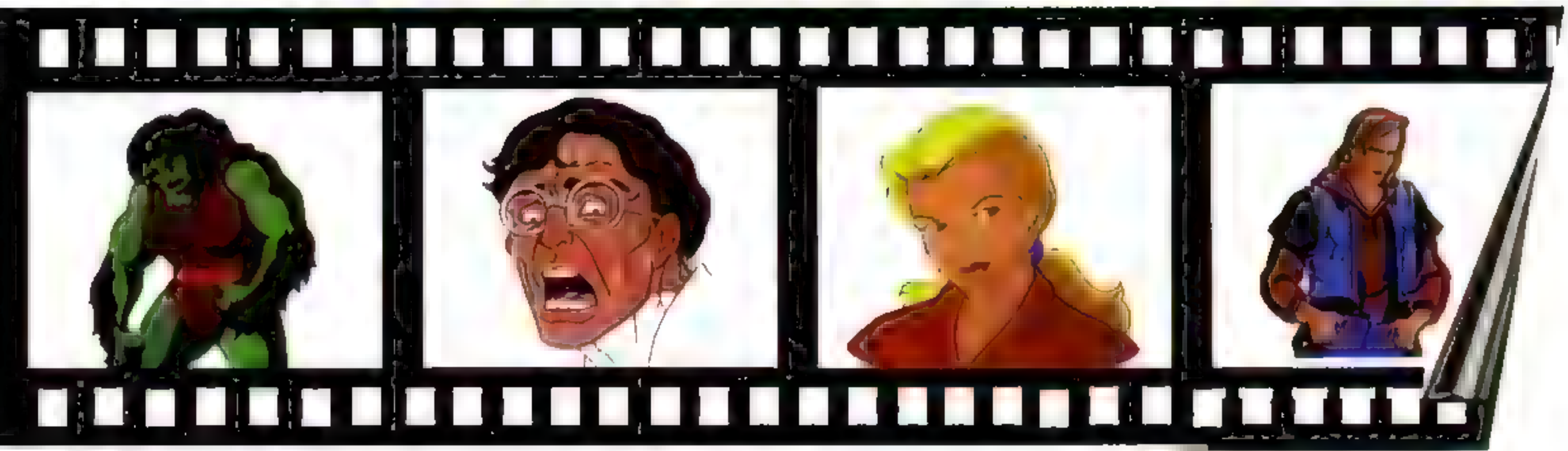
Long suspected by the Environmental Protection Agency of damaging the environment, Roxxon Oil, one of the world's largest energy corporations was implicated in a scheme to exploit the natural resources of the Savage Land. Based in the midst of Antarctica, the Savage Land is an inexplicable anomaly, a prehistoric jungle filled with dinosaurs of all varieties. Kevin Plunder, a.k.a. Ka-Zar is the apparent leader of the Savage Land, and it is he who exposed Roxxon's activities. Plunder was reluctant to comment on the day's events.

Unconfirmed reports placed Spider-Man at the scene as well, and it is believed that he may have been part of Roxxon's scheme.

—CONTINUED IN THE SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN #14

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Andy Mangels's All-New Reel Marvel "The Incredible Hulk" Part I



The myth of a man transforming into his monstrous darker side has been with mankind for centuries. Freud called the opposing personalities the id and the super-ego. Robert Louis Stevenson called the two sides Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. And in 1962, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby called the man Dr. Bruce Banner and his dark side The Incredible Hulk.

For 34 years, the green-skinned Goliath has been an integral part of the Marvel Universe, appearing in not only his own comic series, but guest-starring in just about everyone else's at one time or another. The poor misunderstood brute was always pursued by General "Thunderbolt" Rose and Major Glenn Talbot, even as he pined away for the general's daughter, Betty. Most of the time, teenage Rick Jones was his only friend, as either Banner or the Hulk.

On September 2, 1966, Grantray-Lawrence premiered a new syndicated series known as *The Marvel Super-Heroes*. The animated series aired five days a week, with one of five Marvel heroes brawling their way through a three-part adventure each day. The five heroes who alternated on weekdays were Captain America, Thor, Sub-Mariner, Iron Man. . . and on Tuesdays, the Hulk.

The animation was tremendously primitive, produced through a process called Xerography. Artwork was transferred directly from Marvel comics onto the animation cells, and then given a slight movement by jiggling the cell or sliding it across a background. Each hero had thirteen three-chapter episodes. Most of the *Incredible Hulk* stories were taken from comics drawn by Jack Kirby and Bob Powell, mainly from *Tales To Astonish* and early *Hulk* issues.

The Marvel Super-Heroes series lasted only one year (though it is still in syndication today), and the Hulk went into hiding for a decade. In 1977 Kenneth Johnson pitched a live-action *Incredible Hulk* series to Universal and two pilot films were given a "green light" (Hollywood speak for "yes"). Bill Bixby was cast as Dr. David Bruce Banner, while two-time Mr. Universe Lou Ferrigno was cast as the Hulk.

The Incredible Hulk premiered on November 4, 1977, to great ratings. Viewers caught on quickly to the tragic and lonely figure of Banner, while finding some wish fulfillment in the super-strong Hulk. The series was very quickly ordered as a mid-season replacement. In 1982, after 82 total episodes and one Emmy® award, *The Incredible Hulk* finally ended its run. It would resurface in the mid-to late '80s as three telefilms, although Banner/Hulk was killed in the final film.

While having live-action adventures on CBS, the Hulk guest-starred on NBC's popular animated series, *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*. On September 18, 1982, the series was lengthened to an hour and renamed *The Incredible Hulk and The Amazing Spider-Man*. Each show had a half-hour *Hulk* adventure, narrated by Stan Lee, and featuring Betty Ross, sidekick Rick Jones, and the familiar Banner/Hulk vs. the military theme. Although the series was on the air for two years, the original 13 episodes from the first season were re-aired for season two.

Fourteen years later, in 1996, the United Paramount Network was looking for a super-hero series. They wanted something with a built-in audience, and came to Marvel Productions. Although Marvel was producing several shows for Fox, with more on the way, the Hulk was free for development. UPN snapped up

the Green Goliath immediately, and the series went into active development. Many of the creators who had made *Spider-Man* a success for Fox were on board, and an all-star voice cast was selected. Perhaps the crowning point in casting came with the addition of Lou Ferrigno as the voice of the Hulk, returning to the role he had played in the live-action series.

UPN debuted *The Incredible Hulk* in early September, and the series is popular with fans. Guest-stars from other Marvel animated series are common, including the debut of the animated Ghost Rider (for whom a series has been in development). Here's part 1 of the comprehensive episode guide to the entire first season of *The Incredible Hulk*!

THE INCREDIBLE HULK EPISODE GUIDE

SEASON ONE

#1 The Return of the Beast, Part I (1796-001, 9-8-96)

Written by Bob Forward; Directed by Richard Trueblood

After General Ross thwarts Banner's attempts to cure himself, the Hulk attacks Gamma Base and is captured. Betty convinces her father to allow Bruce to try to cure himself, but the Leader unleashes the gamma-powered Abomination to kidnap Banner. The Hulk battles the Abomination, but then must face General Ross's ultimate weapon, the Omega Laser!

Note: The story picks up at about Hulk #315 in Marvel continuity.

#2 The Return of the Beast, Part II (1796-002, 9-15-96)

Written by Bob Forward; Directed by Leo Sullivan

Surviving the Omega Laser, Hulk escapes Gamma Base, but Banner is later captured by the Abomination and taken to the Leader. Trying to help their friend, Rick Jones and Betty Ross meet up with the gamma-mutated creatures known as the Outcasts. As the Leader attempts to leech off the Hulk's power, Rick, Betty, and the Outcasts invade his laboratory, freeing Banner to become the Hulk.

Note: The voice of the Leader's assistant, the Gargoyle, is Mark Hamill, Luke Skywalker from "Star Wars" and the voice of the Joker on "Batman: The Animated Series."

#3 Raw Power (1796-003, 9-22-96)

Written by Jess Winfield; Directed by Dan Thompson

When the Hulk is engaged in a heated battle with S.H.I.E.L.D. robots, his life is saved by a civilian named Mitch McCutcheon. Later, Banner convinces Mitch to help him in his experimental cure. Unfortunately, the experiment has tragic side effects and transforms Mitch into the energy-consuming monster known as Zzzax! The Hulk must stop Zzzax from attacking Hoover Dam, without destroying his friend Mitch in the process.

Note: This episode is the first appearance of Doc Samson, voiced by radio and TV personality Shadoe Stevens.

#4 Helping Hands, Iron Fist (1796-004, 9-29-96)

Written by Stewart St. John; Directed by Ernesto Lopez

No, it's not a guest appearance by the martial arts Marvel hero, but two more metallic heroes. Banner goes to Los Angeles to appeal to Tony Stark to cure him. Unfortunately, General Ross's Hulkbusters attack the Stark Enterprises laboratory in the midst of the gamma experiment, and Rick Jones is injured. The Hulk is joined in the battle against the Hulkbusters by Iron Man and War Machine.

Note: The voice actors who portray Iron Man and War Machine are the same actors as on the syndicated two-season Marvel Action Hour Iron Man series, running from 1994-96.

#5 Innocent Blood (1796-005, 10-6-96)

Written by Bob Forward; Directed by Rich Trueblood

The Ghost Rider arrives in town to destroy the Hulk for the wrongs he's committed against innocents. Meanwhile, Major Talbot shoots Hulk with a tranquilizing weapon that could kill him. When Ghost Rider realizes he's wrong about the Hulk, he becomes greenskin's ally, but Rick, Betty, and Doc Samson are having enough trouble keeping the Hulk alive!

Note: This episode introduced the animated Ghost Rider, serving as a back-door pilot for the character.

#6 Man To Man, Beast To Beast (1796-006, 10-27-96)

Written by Len Wein; Directed by Tom Tataranowicz

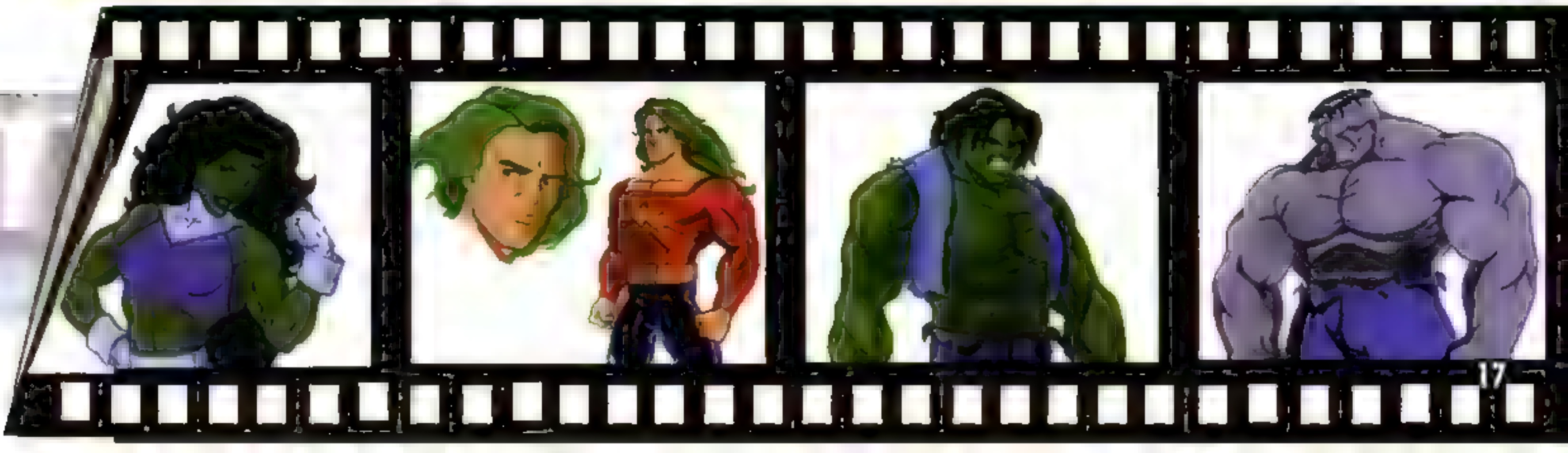
Banner has come to the Canadian Arctic wilderness to find Dr. Walter Langowski, an expert in gamma ray exposure. When the Hulk befriends a small boy, he is attacked by local villagers who believe him to be Sasquatch. After being saved from the attack by the real Sasquatch (Langowski), Banner convinces him to experiment on both of them to rid them of their respective bestial sides. The experiment goes awry, trapping Langowski forever as Sasquatch, and he attacks Hulk in anger.

Note: This episode has many ties to Frankenstein, from the Hulk befriending a child and being attacked by villagers, to an end scene with Sasquatch floating into the Arctic Ocean on an iceberg.

Coming Next Month in Marvel VISION:

The conclusion to the Incredible Hulk Episode Guide with episodes #7-13, including guest appearances by She-Hulk, the Fantastic Four, Thor, and. . . the grey-skinned Hulk!

Andy Mangels has been chronicling the history of comic book movies and TV shows for a variety of magazines over the last decade, as well as writing comics such as BLOODWULF, SLIDERS, and STAR WARS: BOBA FETT. Resurrected from the pages of MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, Andy Mangels's All-New Reel Marvel will be a semi-regular feature in Marvel VISION.



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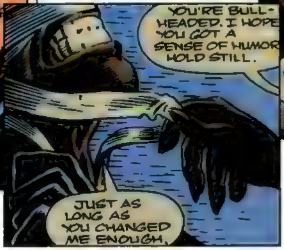
Marvel's Silliest Moments

Fell on Black Days

The Punisher often views the world strictly in terms of black or white. But there was one story where his perspective switched to all black, when his skin was darkened and he had to pose as an African-American! Can't believe ol' Frank Castle could pass himself off as a person of color? Well, it really happened, in the pages of PUNISHER #59-62!

The Punisher was on the run from the Kingpin, who had every mafioso in New York on Frank's trail! Frank met up with a sexy lady plastic surgeon, who also happened to be a crack addict and a prostitute! (Now there's a combination you don't see every day!) Somehow, Frank trusted her to perform surgery on him! The surgery was necessary after Frank was the victim of a brutal knife attack to his face.



Frank told the Doc, "Change me so my best friend wouldn't know me!" (With instructions like that, Frank's lucky he didn't come out of surgery wearing a dress!) The Doc performed the surgery and as a result changed the pigment of Frank's skin from light to dark. (Apparently the Doc had previously done some work on Michael Jackson!) We're not quite sure what procedure she used: at one point, it's called a skin graft; at another, it's a melanin treatment. [Melanin is the pigment that denotes skin tone.—Tim]

The story was inspired by the novel "Black Like Me," in which a white reporter went undercover disguised as a black man, to witness the black experience firsthand. Frank Castle's own personal black experience was chronicled by Caucasian writer Mike Baron, but black writer (and then-Marvel staffer) Marc McLaurin was brought in to handle all the African-American dialogue.

With the mob still on his trail, Frank went on the run to Chicago where, as fate would have it, he was stopped by a half-dozen white racist cops who pulled a Rodney King on him! Frank's reaction: "I had no patience for bigots when I was white. Now that I'm black, I don't like it any better!"

Fortunately, Chicago's native super hero Luke Cage happened by and saved Frank's butt. Frank's new skin color fooled even Cage, who enlisted the Punisher (now calling himself "Rook") to help rid his neighborhood of crack dealers!

Frank and Cage busted some heads for a few issues, until Cage noticed that Frank was "starting to look a little pale." It seems Frank's melanin treatment, which for no really well explained reason was necessary for the skin graft to take, was starting to wear off! In the final chapter, entitled "Fade to White," Frank returned to his normal skin color. Cage commented, "Nice disguise, till you lost your tan."

Marvel's First Annual Mark Gruenwald Halloween Bash!

Photos courtesy of: Amy W., Dino K. & Jared O.

MIS Whiz Dino Kotenoglou as The Black Knight

Bobbie "Bumble Bee" Chase

Bob Harras getting into the act as ROM

MFP's Amy Weingartner and Polly Chevalier are beastly

Andy Ball as Peter... Spider-Man and Mel Sanchez as his alter ego Dean Cain

Mocha Love-God Steve Bunche as The Robot Monster

Romita's Raider Supreme: "Pond Scum"

Rita Prospero and Regina Massaro play the Donut Game

Bill Rosemann as Goblin Glider target Ben Reilly

Mark Bernardo as Robert DeNiro from "Taxi Driver" and Catherine "Madcap" Gruenwald

Assistant Editor Matt Hicks as The Cat In The Hat

Dino liked the donuts on a string too

Bullpenners Michelle Bowlin and Caroline Wells as "R. Crumb Dorothy" and the Angel of Death

Art Director Darren Auck as Gorgon the Inhuman

Polly "Ladybug" Watson and Tim

Angel of Death vs. Black Knight

Suzanne Gaffney-Beason about to wrap Bob for all those years of abuse

No, really, that's Bob Harras

Kelly and the Twenty-Gum Kid

Jason and Dan fight for the spin prize

Victorious Dan gets the leftover donuts

Chris Fagan as Spider-Boy

Bernardo, Massaro, Tuohy and Jennifer Scholl say cheese

Jared Osborne as the MTV Beach House Tiki God

Kelly Corvese sends X-Assistant Jason Liebig spinning

Dan Hosek goes for the wild ride

Kelly Corvese as Don Juan DeMarco, the greatest lover of women... Yeah right!

The devolution of the Mighty Ski/Rom

STEVE SKROCE

THE INTERVIEW, PART ONE

FROM SLAG SCRAPER TO SUPERSTAR

From humble beginnings in the Barkerverse, to designing and defining one of the hottest new mutant characters on the planet, to attaining his dream of drawing his childhood hero Spider-Man for a living, Steve Skroce has had a charmed comics career. Here, in the first of a two-part interview, this young, deadpan-humored Canadian chats about what makes him tick — and what makes his artistry click.

MB: Just for the sake of the readers, how exactly do you pronounce your last name?
SS: It's pronounced "SKROSE."

MB: So it's not "SKRO-CHEE"?
SS: Well, it's "SKRO-CHEE," too, I guess. It's a Croatian name and I hear other Croatian guys pronouncing it that way. Yeah, I guess they're both right.

MB: Where'd you grow up?
SS: In a small town in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

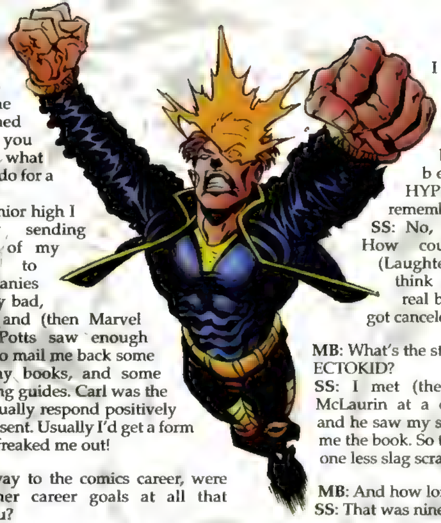
MB: You have any bothers or sisters? Any other artists in the family?
SS: Yeah, actually, my sister, Shannon Blanchard, is a colorist for Marvel. You might mention that she could always use more work! (Laughs) Hey, a little nepotism never hurt anybody, right?

MB: Especially in this business! I guess the inevitable follow-up question would be: "Were you into comics as a kid?"
SS: Not really. I still don't have any interest. I just picked up HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY on a whim, and practiced a few months, and voila! Nah, I'm just being a jerk. (Both laugh) Seriously, ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to be in this for a living. The first comic I ever got was an issue of one of the old STAR TREK series, published by Gold Key or someone like that. Then I found out about a comics club that existed in my hometown, and through that I got into other comics. My first Marvel was an issue of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, I forget the issue number; it had an Alan Weiss cover, with Spidey fighting Kraven the Hunter. I was hooked from that point on.

MB: Boy, I wish I had a club like that around when I went to high school...
SS: Yeah, it was a good idea.

MB: So that first issue of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN led you to a lot of other books?
SS: Yeah, I really became a Marvel Zombie. I bought everything. SPIDER-MAN, X-MEN, CAPTAIN AMERICA, DAREDEVIL. The collectting bug bit me big time.

MB: You mentioned HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY before. Were you serious?
SS: No, I was just kidding there. When I was starting out, I just copied the stuff I was seeing in the books I liked. Paul Smith's run on the UNCANNY X-MEN was one of the big influences. That was really good stuff.



MB: So by the time you finished high school, you already knew what you wanted to do for a living...
SS: Yeah, in junior high I was already sending Xerox copies of my artwork out to comics companies — it was really bad, obviously! — and (then Marvel editor) Carl Potts saw enough potential in it to mail me back some cinematography books, and some xeroxed drawing guides. Carl was the first guy to actually respond positively to anything I'd sent. Usually I'd get a form letter. It really freaked me out!

MB: On the way to the comics career, were there any other career goals at all that sidetracked you?
SS: Nope!

MB: Nope?
SS: Nope. Just comics. That was it!

MB: Let me rephrase, then: Were there any other interesting jobs on the way to making a living in comics?
SS: Well, I worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken.

MB: Really?
SS: But don't ever ask me the secret recipe, because I'd have to kill you. (Both laugh) Then I worked in this metal shop, where they made these aluminum boxes. Whenever they would weld them together, they'd leave this little splatter of metal that hardened on the edges. My job was to use a little metal file to scrape it off. So I was a Slag Scraper. That's the job I was doing before Marvel Comics!

MB: Did you have any formal training? Art school or anything like that?
SS: Nope.

MB: You're entirely self-taught?
SS: Well, I used a lot of books and stuff to learn... yeah, I guess that counts as self-taught.

MB: So how old were you when you got your first job in comics?
SS: I was eighteen when they sent me some actual Marvel paper to draw on. I thought that was so cool. My room became a shrine built around the pile of Marvel paper! (Makes sound of choir singing; both laugh.) So I got hired for my first book when I was nineteen.

MB: And that book would've been... ummm, HYPERKIND? Am I remembering correctly?
SS: No, it was ECTOKID! How could you forget? (Laughter) You know, I think the market took a real blow when that one got canceled.

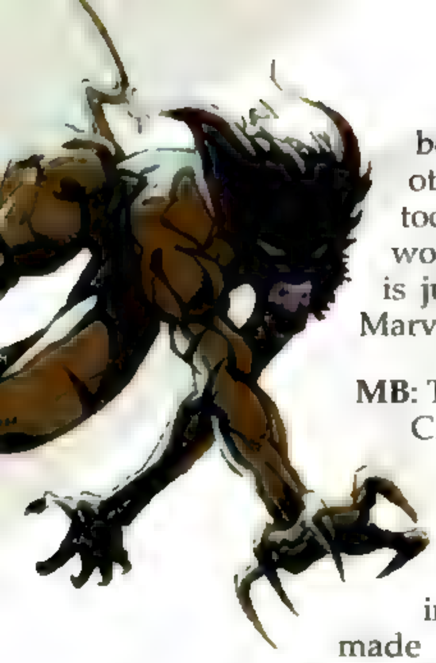
MB: What's the story of how you got ECTOKID?
SS: I met (then editor) Marcus McLaurin at a comics convention, and he saw my samples and offered me the book. So the world was short one less slag scraper after that!

MB: And how long did that last?
SS: That was nine issues altogether.

MB: How did that assignment lead you into doing an X-Men book?
SS: I came down to the Marvel offices visiting my friend (and former assistant editor on ECTOKID) Spencer Lamm, and I showed my work around, and that led me to a fill-in issue of CABLE. And the fill-in issue led to a regular assignment that lasted about nine issues.

MB: Just to digress for a moment, what comics do you like to read these days?
SS: I love Dan Clowes' EIGHTBALL, I like HATE. I still read the X-MEN books; I love Carlos Pacheco's work, and Chris Bachalo is awesome on GENERATION X. That new guy who's been doing DEADPOOL — Ed McGuinness — he's really good. STRAY BULLETS is good. I've liked some of the GRENDEL and STAR WARS books that have come out.

MB: So a variety of mainstream and not-so-mainstream books...
SS: Sure. I like Frank Miller's stuff, and Kelley Jones' BATMAN. I like the work that's



being done on all the other SPIDER-MAN titles, too. I like Mike Wieringo's work, and John Romita, Jr. is just my favorite artist at Marvel.

MB: To dovetail back in, when CABLE turned into X-MAN during the "Age of Apocalypse" storyline, and then X-MAN spun away into its own series, what made you opt to stick with X-MAN rather than CABLE?
SS: Umm... they just asked me if I wanted to do it! It was a totally new and different guy, so I said, "sure!" I thought it would be... neat. They put Ian Churchill on CABLE, so it all worked out great!

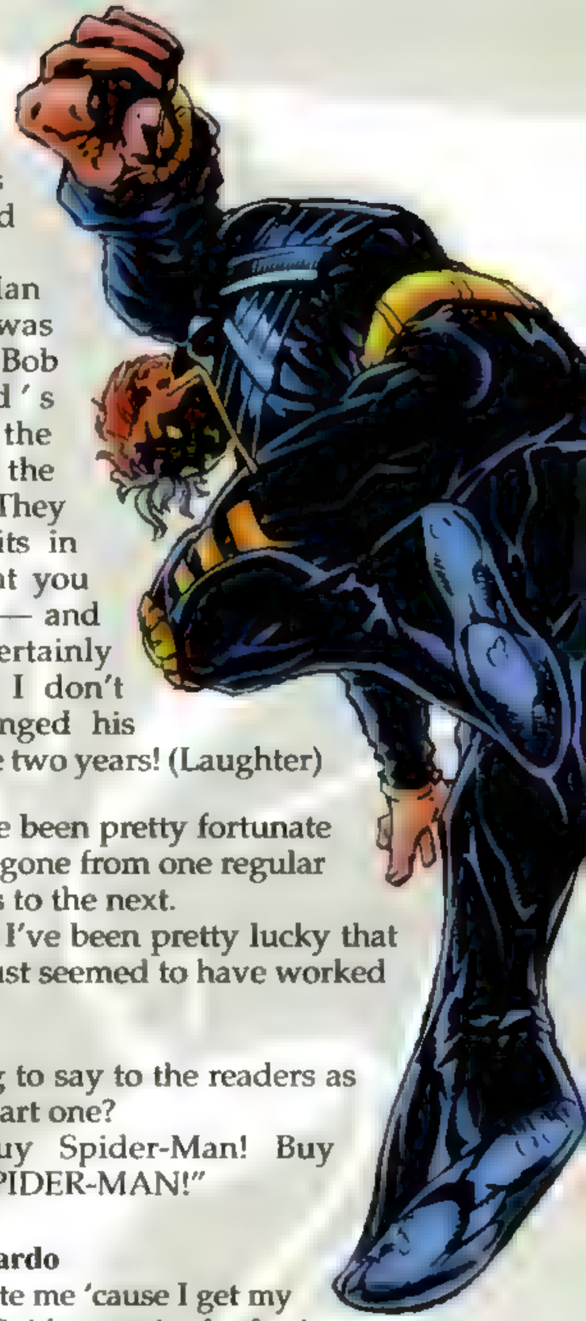
MB: I'm looking ahead a little bit here, but when did you first start seriously thinking about taking a shot at SPIDER-MAN?
SS: All the time. I've always wanted to draw Spidey. The thing was, I had never gotten to draw such a classic Marvel super hero. CABLE was fun, 'cause I actually got to redesign his costume, and X-MAN was brand new, so I really got into designing him and drawing him... but Spider-Man really has a level of fun about him that no other character has, at least to me.

MB: Cool. But we'd better save most of the Spidey stuff for part two.
SS: Ooooh, part two! (Mock dramatic music) Can't wait!

MB: So what kind of thoughts and ideas went into the designing of X-Man and his world?
SS: Well, the costume was just how I pictured the little laboratory suit that Sinister would have made for him. The glowing eye was there 'cause he has similar powers to Cable.

MB: And in this book, you got to design your own little corner of the "Age of Apocalypse" world.
SS: I would have to say, without sounding egotistical, that I should take sole credit for designing the Age of Apocalypse. Yeah, right... (Both laugh)

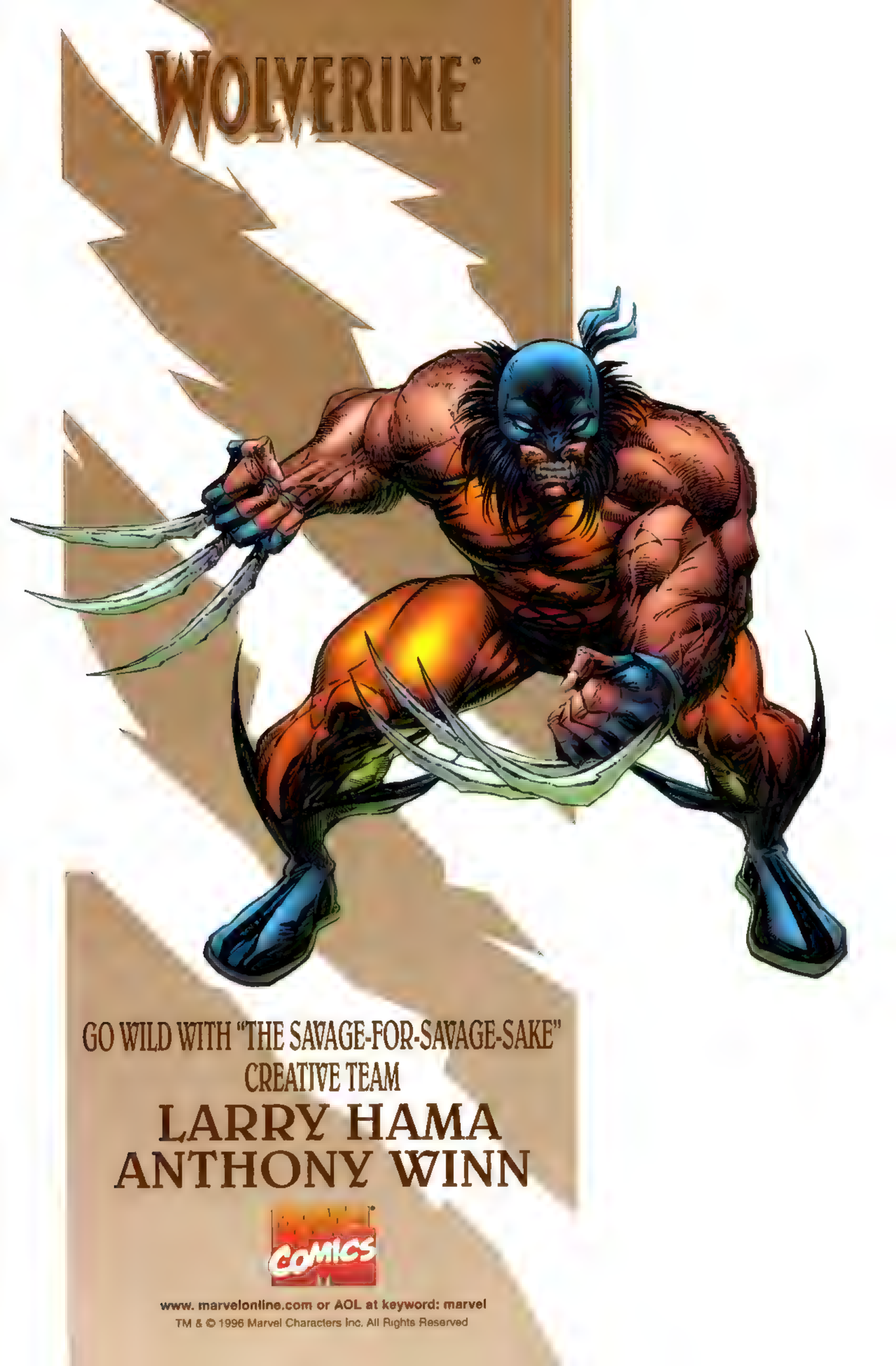
MB: What I was heading toward was, with that world being so post-Apocalyptic and alien, were there any movies, books, or anything that has influenced you?
SS: For X-Man himself, I was thinking of Bob Ringwood's design for the steel suit in the movie Dune. They had these suits in the movie that you could live in — and Nate Grey certainly lived in his. I don't think he changed his clothes for like two years! (Laughter)



MB: So you've been pretty fortunate so far to have gone from one regular ongoing series to the next.
SS: Oh, yeah. I've been pretty lucky that way. Things just seemed to have worked out.

MB: Anything to say to the readers as we wrap up part one?
SS: Yes. "Buy Spider-Man! Buy AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!"

— Mark Bernardo
Don't hate me 'cause I get my Spidey comics for free!



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Elektra died long before she lay bleeding in the arms of her lover, Matt Murdock... the blind adventurer known to the world as Daredevil, the man without fear. She died to the world when her father was killed. To her college-love, Matt. To everything she loved. And so she left America, only to return years later as an assassin-for-hire.

Elektra, trained in the arts of administering death, then returned to America only to find Murdock again as well. It was her love for him that killed her. For, though she no longer had a heart of her own, somehow, somewhere in a forgotten place, she still carried his. And so she died. Again.

But she was not easily laid to rest, and the ninja clan known as the Hand performed an ancient pagan ritual of blood and mist and attempted her resurrection. An attempt whose results are still shrouded in mystery. Some say she yet again lives, having been purified of her life as an assassin by Murdock's love for her. Others say she is dead.

She could be any body. In any body.

She could be any body. In any body.

But in the world of Time Slip and hot new penciler Kevin Lau's artistic vision, the answer is both more obvious and more an enigma. For Elektra's body was destroyed in a fire many years before in a church, only after being riddled with arrows of the kind the HAND are known to operate with.

But ironically, recently, there have been reports of someone dressing like Elektra, with the same ruthlessness, the same hatred for life, on the other side of the world in Japan.

There, after only days, the HAND is all but extinct. In weeks, the strongest members of the Yakuza have also faced defeat. And a new force is beginning to assert itself. A clan whose name and symbol is that of THE SAI ON THE CRIMSON SUN. It is said this new clan has ears everywhere, and strikes with an invisibility that is commonly associated with ninja assassins. It is also said that at the head of THE SAI ON THE CRIMSON SUN is a beautiful woman.

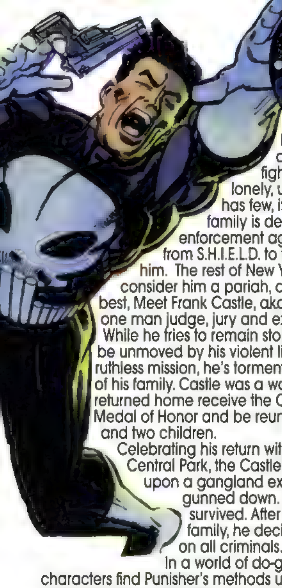
A woman whose deadly nature has made her the target of every underworld assassin on the planet. But, as of this moment, every attempt on her life has failed. Every successful mission proves days later a dismal failure. For though her appearance changes, Elektra still lives. And some wonder if Elektra were not a name for many women.

One ex-S.H.I.E.L.D. agent named Garrett (his dossier suggests personal schizophrenia), who has had personal experience with Elektra, had this to say.

"She's doin' it again, I tell ya. She uses dat Ninja magic of hers and switched bodies. The 'crazy broad' is still alive. There ain't no one safe. There ain't no such thing as her bein' purified. She's as twisted as she ever was."

"She could be anybody. In any body."

Elektra



ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES: THE PUNISHER!

The story behind Marvel's Big Bang Theory!

By Pat Jankiewicz

He's a warrior, fighting a lonely, unwinnable war. He has few, if any, friends. His family is dead. Every law enforcement agency in the world, from S.H.I.E.L.D. to the NYPD, hunts him. The rest of New York's heroes consider him a pariah, a loose cannon at best, Meet Frank Castle, aka The Punisher, a one man judge, jury and executioner.

While he tries to remain stoic and pretend to be unmoved by his violent lifestyle and ruthless mission, he's tormented by the murder of his family. Castle was a war veteran who returned home receive the Congressional Medal of Honor and be reunited with his wife and two children.

Celebrating his return with a picnic in Central Park, the Castle Family stumbled upon a gangland execution and were gunned down. Only Frank survived. After avenging his family, he decided to wage war on all criminals.

In a world of do-gooders, other characters find Punisher's methods unnerving. He diametrically opposes their own deeply held philosophies. He's run up against Spider-Man, Daredevil, Captain America (although they're both veterans), Luke Cage, Ghost Rider, Nick Fury and even Wolverine. The Punisher is unique, even in a Universe full of unique personalities.

He has no super powers or secret identity, he's simply a normal man fighting a war on crime. His only training came from the Marine Corp. He's a master at all forms of hand to hand combat and an expert marksman. He's also the first gun toting vigilante in modern comics. Where most heroes have a code against killing, the Punisher makes no bones about his goal to exterminate all criminals.

The Man in black first appeared in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129, where J.Jonah Jameson calls him The most newsworthy thing to happen to New York since Boss Tweed. The vigilante declares I kill only those who deserve killing and Spider-Man deserves to die! The Punisher stalked Spider-Man because he wrongly believed Spidey murdered Gwen Stacy and Norman Osborn.very direct about his goal to execute criminals. not something I like doing, he tells the webhead. simply something that has to be done...And I've got nothing to lose by risking what's left of my life wiping out your kind of parasite.

Punisher sprang from the brow of writer Gerry Conway, who had started writing for AMAZING SPIDER-MAN at the tender age of 18. He was created as an enemy for Spider-Man, he explains. "He was a pawn of another character, the Jackal. Punisher was going to be a one-issue villain, to be defeated at the ending. Instead, something strange happened. The writer became fond of his villain. The character voice was stronger than I thought, so I made him a more man than I had planned him to be, Conway admits.

"Originally, he was gonna be one of Spidey's non-powered super-villains, like Crime Master or The Big Man, but there was something different about him he seemed too interesting to be killed or sent to jail at the end of the issue.

I liked the idea of the Punisher, a loner, operating on the outside of the law and society, in a war to destroy all crime. I thought it would be interesting to have him go after Spider-Man, because the Daily Bugle had been calling him a criminal. The Punisher was a tough, unpredictable character. My inspiration was 'The Executioner' series...The paperback books by Don Pendleton, Conway reveals. "They're the modern equivalent of the pulps. That's what gave me the idea for the lone, slightly psychotic avenger. He's a character like the classic pulp heroes, There's even a little of The Shadow in The Punisher."

"He wore a skintight jumpsuit with a giant skull on the chest. The skull's teeth were formed out of a cartridge belt." The suit was provided by Marvel art director John Romita, Sr. "Of all the designs I've done, the one that's probably made the most impact is the Punisher costume," Romita shrugs. "Generally, what would happen is an editor would come to me and say 'We've got a character...'(and need a design). I think Punisher was inspired by the Charles Bronson vigilante movie Death Wish, where the guy takes the law in his own hands. They came to me and said 'We want a character who's a vigilante type'. Using the skull as an old world design on his chest was my idea, put the belt in, the weaponry and the general silhouette of him. In retrospect, I wonder why they didn't ask me to give him a mask, he muses. When I first did the sketch—which I still have, by the way—it hangs in my office first sketch from 1974, I didn't put a mask on him. I fully expected them to say 'This is great, but put a mask on him! I was surprised they didn't and decided not to say anything. Why did they let me go with an unmasked character? No secret identity!

One of the reasons that Punisher made an impression in his debut was his savagery. He's able to fight Spidey to a standstill, despite his lack of super powers. With a battery of weapons and his Special Forces training, he cleans the webslinger clock until Spidey finally calms him down. happened. Readers took an instant liking to this brutal upstart. The issue sold extremely well and the Punisher returned. Something about the Punisher made Spider-Man writers extra creative. His subsequent guest appearances always brought a great new villain. When he returned in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #134, he brought South American terrorist, The Tarantula. He also brought such twisted foes as Jigsaw, Moses Magnum (Now a hitman and the seven foot albino enforcer, Tombstone. There's a reason for that, the essential relationship of Spidey and Punisher was a triangle, Conway notes. The really bad guy, like Tarantula or Tombstone, was the third part. It's like a John Woo movie, where everybody is pointing their guns at each other. Of all the spin-offs from THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, which include The BlackCat, Venom, Silver Sable and The Prowler, none have come close to the success of The Punisher."

A classic Punisher theme, dating from his first appearance is his willingness to jump to conclusions and get tricked by a villain. This began when the Jackal manipulated him into hunting down Spider-Man and continues all the way to his current situation Brainwashed into thinking Nick Fury killed his family, Punisher wasted the one-eyed spy and now heads a major New York crime family.In the late 70s, the character personality began to change. The Punisher no longer seemed a brilliant tactician and warrior. Instead, he was becoming a craven killer. Frank Miller did that when he used him in DAREDEVIL(See the graphic novel CHILD'S PLAY), Conway explains. "While I respected the Punisher, I didn't approve of his methods. Frank's (Miller) much more liberal than I am and, but he saw him as a social evil!

By the early 80s, The Punisher was in bad shape. Writers who didn't like the character had reduced him to a ranting madman shooting jaywalkers and litterbugs. Frank Castle's days seemed numbered...And then, in 1986, he returned with a vengeance. His popular miniseries written by Steven Grant and drawn by Mike Zeck and John Beatty, revived Punisher, his war on crime, his tragic past and such forgotten Marvel foes as Jigsaw and The Maggia. Even out of character behavior was explained(he was drugged by criminals). The book's success established Punisher as one of Marvel's major players.

"The Punisher was viewed by Marvel as a character they didn't want anything to do with, to use only when you had a goofy story. They were a little afraid of him," Grant explains. "By and large, the attitude towards him was expressed in SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN issues where Punisher went completely psychotic and started gunning down jaywalkers. It seemed to me Marvel wasn't really in-step with what was going on elsewhere in popular culture, and really didn't understand their own character."I'd been trying for a couple years to get a PUNISHER miniseries off the ground, and finally Mike Zeck came off SECRET WARS. I called him up and both he and John Beatty wanted to do Punisher.

We had the same take on him," he says happily. Frank Castle's biggest hurdle came from within. The sales department was no tat all pleased with him, Grant recalls. One person there said Marvel's audience had no interest in the adventures of a maniac who kills people! There was talk of getting it canceled because the concept was morally offensive! The first issue sold out in three hours and they suddenly thought a PUNISHER series was a good idea." —The miniseries got to the core of the character. "What I like about Punisher isn't his gun use, it's his attitude. In my stories, he doesn't think with a gun, Grant declares. He's very calculating; a strategist and military man. He's always thinking, reacting and assessing on the spot. He doesn't just gun people down." Conway was delighted with the miniseries.I thought it was wonderful! I loved their take The guy gone so completely berserk, he has to come back to sanity.

Mike Zeck is an amazing artist and Steve Grant realized what the character was about. One problem with The Punisher...Because of his approach to fighting crime, his enemies rarely return. I was shocked when Marvel showed me Punisher's Rogues Gallery from one of his annuals and saw that he doesn't have any living foes. Grant states. "The books featured a villain named Gregario. I kept thinking 'Gregario, Gregario, where do I know that name?' It hit me that it was a black character I created as Don Chavello's bodyguard in my PUNISHER miniseries. I thought 'They brought back Gregario?!? Jeez, they must have been really hard up! Castle's adventures were even made into a bad movie.

THE PUNISHER starred Dolph Lundgren and Lou Gossett and reduced Marvel vigilante into a generic killer and even ditched his costume! The skull symbol was only seen on the head of his knife. "I have never sat through the whole thing," Conway admits. "Just the idea of Dolph Lundgren as the Punisher please! It was shot in Australia, so it lacked the American feel.

I still wonder how they could do such an over the top, comic book character and not have him wear his costume! That's what separates him from everybody else...I'm always amazed by studio execs," he muses. David S. Goyer, screenwriter of Marvel's upcoming BLADE movie, feels "THE PUNISHER was awful. He should have been the easiest Marvel character to film, you wouldn't have to change anything. I will never understand how they screwed him up—they didn't even keep his skull outfit. That was so stupid!"

Ironically, the animated SPIDER-MAN series did a much more faithful version of The Punisher than the film. Voiced by actor John Beck, Castle was in uniform, driving around in his Battlevan, hunting Spidey down. SPIDER-MAN producer/story editor John Semper explains that "I wanted to do The Punisher right, so I got Carl Potts to write it! The Punisher story originated with me and I got Carl onboard to keep Punisher pure. Within the restrictions of Saturday morning, we did a Punisher that watered down—he's a real, gun-toting Punisher! What makes Punisher so unusual is that, with all the heroes opposed to him, his murderous behavior, cold personality and black costume, he could easily be taken for a villain.

"In the original SPIDER-MAN story, he was a bad guy and from my point-of-view, he's a bad guy," Steven Grant asserts. "I have nothing against writing a bad guy. I'd rather write a bad guy than a good guy. Writers always identify with their villains," he laughs. John Romita, Sr. feels that "When I was doing The Punisher in 1974, he was a tame version of today" Punisher, because that's the way the world was then. We felt a vigilante who would shoot people without giving them a chance to explain or defend themselves was extreme!

The Punisher's lonely, endless war is destined to continue. His one friend, Microchip, has been killed and he now allies himself with the very men he'd once sworn to exterminate. As Spider-Man once noted, "That man's got problems that make mine look like a birthday party." Still, no matter where his battles take him, his father is proud of him. very happy that The Punisher has lasted as long as he has," Gerry Conway declares.Every writer wants to make an impact and it's a very sweet memory knowing that with him I did.

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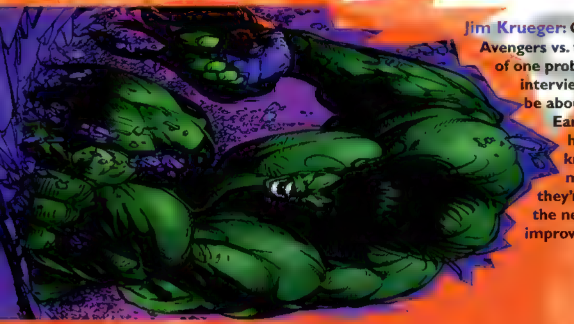
HULK VS. THE AVENGERS

THE ROB LIEFELD INTERVIEW • THE ROB LIEFELD INTERVIEW • THE ROB LIEFELD INTERVIEW



Jim Krueger: Okay, Rob. The Avengers vs. the Hulk. I can think of one problem already. This interview was supposed to be about the future of Earth's mightiest heroes, but I don't know if they've got much of a future if they're going up against the new and vastly improved Jade Jaws.

Rob Liefeld: All I can say is this. I'll tell you about #4 but I'm going to keep the end of #5 a secret. Basically Avengers #4 opens on the Hulk and a catch-up for readers as to what's happened to him since the transformation. The Hulk comes to a town and it's here that the military engages him with all the high-tech weaponry they have... which is pretty high-tech useless. And they get creamed.

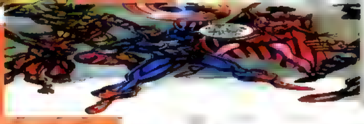
JK: Yuck. I tend to take things pretty literally. So what happens after "HULK MAKE JUICE!" out of the army?

RL: Hulk gets a drink of some water that's tainted and poisoned by Thor's brother Loki. And Loki uses his Norse magic to possess the Hulk and send him to Avengers Island in search of Banner.

JK: But Banner is the Hulk.

RL: Right... so all the Hulk finds are the Avengers. And this leads to an all-out battle between the Hulk and Earth's Mightiest Heroes. By the end of this issue, they're all pretty much so wiped out.

JK: So #5 is a funeral issue?



RL: Nope. The Hulk wipes everyone out except for Thor, who appears on the last page of Avengers #4. Then, and this is so cool and it was Jeph Loeb's idea, #5 features 20 full pages of Hulk vs. Thor while the lives of the Avengers hang in the balance. What's so cool is that each page will be a splash page of the battle.

JK: Now who's drawing this issue? You? Chap Yaep? Who?

RL: Are you kidding? I've got to draw this issue. I've been a Marvel fan for 25 years and this is my chance to draw the ultimate battle between Marvel's two strongest characters.

JK: Who wins?

RL: I told you before I'm not going to tell the end of #5.

JK: Okay... what else is going to happen in the book?

RL: I was talking to Jim Lee about this the other day. And neither of us feel there's been enough interplay between the characters and their world. We've focused on the big stories and now it's time to focus on some of the smaller ones. You know, the relationships that form... the rivalries... the friendships.

JK: Like...?

: We're going to see Cap adjusting to the leadership of the team. And that's tough because Cap is pretty much a loner. There will be more interplay between him and the Swordsman as well. Meanwhile, the Enchantress is attempting to tempt the Scarlet Witch into... well, I shouldn't say that yet.

JK: Well, we got the Hulk; when does Iron Man join the team?

: It's funny you should ask. Everything causes something else to happen in this book. The Hulk's attack on the Avengers pretty much destroys the island. So, the Avengers are going to need funding... someone who has loads of money... someone learning about what it's like to be a hero in the first place... someone like Tony Stark A.K.A Iron Man.

JK: Anyone else joining the team?

RL: Yeah. Avengers #4 features the first appearance of the all-new, all-different Ant-Man. And just wait until you've seen the cool new design Ian Churchill has come up with for Hank Pym's first alter-ego.

: Wait a second. Ian Churchill of CABLE fame is drawing Avengers?

RL: Yep. And wait till you see how he handles the team... and their enemies. After the big Hulk vs. Avengers storyline, the Masters Of Evil are formed. And that means the Executioner, the Grim Reaper, and even Wonder Man will be in the book in a couple of issues.

: And after that?

: Hey, they're the Masters Of Evil! There is no after that. The Avengers don't stand a chance. Not one in a... that is... unless... but that's impossible... almost... yeah, we could...

: Rob?

: Oh, Rob?

: Sheesh. I guess I'll call you back later.

THERE ARE SOME PROJECTS THAT ARE BEGUN OR DEVELOPED HERE THAT NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OR WHITES OF FANDOM'S ASSEMBLED EYES. PROJECTS SO SECRET, SO HIDDEN WITHIN AN EDITOR'S DRAWERS... AND WE DON'T MEAN IT LIKE THAT... SHEESH... SO HIDDEN THAT THEY ARE WHISPERED ABOUT AND THEN FORGOTTEN. ART THAT'S CATALOGUED AND XEROXED BY ONLY A FEW WITHIN THE HALLS OF MARVEL... AND THEN NEVER SEES PRINT.

THIS MONTH, BEAR WITNESS TO STEVE RUDE'S CHARACTER IMAGES FOR A LICENSEE PROJECT THAT NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, A PROJECT IS DEVELOPED BASED ON THE "CLASSIC" MARVEL LOOK. AND NO ONE CAN CAPTURE THAT "CLASSIC" LOOK LIKE RUDE, WHO CITES JACK KIRBY AS ONE OF HIS PRIMARY "COMIC ART" INFLUENCES. FOR NEW FANS, JACK KIRBY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESIGN AND LOOK OF MOST OF MARVEL'S CLASSIC CHARACTERS, INCLUDING THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE ORIGINAL X-MEN, THE HULK, CAPTAIN AMERICA, SPIDER-MAN, IRON MAN, THOR, THE AVENGERS, THE BLACK PANTHER, THE INHUMANS AND SO MANY MORE CHARACTERS THAT HE WILL ALWAYS BE KNOWN AS "THE KING."

AND STEVE RUDE WHO, ALONG WITH WRITER MIKE BARON, IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS ONGOING CREATOR-OWNED SERIES NEXUS, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MONTH'S INSTALLMENT OF...

THE GREATEST COMICS NEVER SEEN!

BEAST FILES

SUBJECT FILE: SPIDER-MAN

"NATURE TEACHES BEASTS TO KNOW THEIR FRIENDS" — SHAKESPEARE

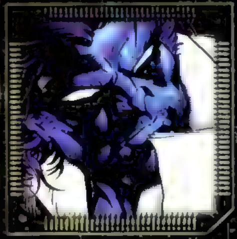
No truer statement could be uttered in regards to this Beast. Nature has indeed taught me to know my friends... and in the X-Men I have found a family. But outside of them, I have known precious few. I had always considered the Avengers to be the closest I've ever come to good friends outside of the X-Men. Yet now with their recent departure, I'm left with a void in that department. A void which my mind can only fill with regards to one man... Spider-Man. Spider-Man is and may forever remain the friend I never quite know. It may just be part of his elusive nature, or perhaps for some darker reason. Whichever the case may be, I have chosen to leave him to his privacy. This does, however, make my task of preserving a catalog of our world a bit daunting in his particular file. I will, however, endeavor to do my best.

I am often amused that the first time Bobby [See File: Iceman] and I met Spidey, we actually believed him to be a mutant, and even invited him to join the X-Men. However, he quickly dismissed us and went on his merry way. I think it's safe to say that I liked him the moment I met him. Unfortunately, the second time we met, it was over a misunderstanding and we devolved into fisticuffs. Over the years, however, he and the X-Men would grow to trust each other. And he and I would go on to join each other in many a worthwhile cause.

Perhaps one of the most puzzling things about this paragon is his ever changing appearance and attitude. I've seen him go from a seemingly carefree spirit, laughing in the face of danger, to a deadly serious man, seemingly battling for life and limb. I've also seen him in enough costumes to give Janet Van Dyne [See File: The Wasp] a run for her money. Who can fathom the depth of changes wrought in his personal life which may account for these differences. Yet somehow, through it all, everyone's "friendly neighborhood" Spider-Man rises to the occasion. And despite what the Daily Bugle [See File: J.J. Jameson] may say, in picking friends, I believe I could do no better.

NOTES:

Spider-Man's powers seem to be a derivative of those of an actual spider. Exactly how he acquired them is anyone's guess, but he is definitely not a mutant. He seems to possess the proportionate strength and speed of a spider. These abilities alone would make him a very powerful adversary indeed. I have witnessed him pressing around ten tons, and moving with enough speed to easily dodge machine gun fire. Add to this his uncanny ability to adhere to seemingly any surface. Exactly how this is accomplished I'm not certain. Perhaps this is done through mechanical means such as Natasha [See File: Black Widow] uses, or it may simply be yet another manifestation of his powers. Next up are his web-shooters. I have ruled out the possibility that these are natural webs, as unlike a spider's web Spider-Man's webs dissolve in a little over an hour's time. However, if they are not natural, then this would tend to indicate the work of an advanced intellect. For it would take a genius level IQ to develop a propulsion system capable of deploying a web-line with as numerous capabilities as I've seen him use. Last but not least is a power I've long suspected our good ol' Spidey to possess. Only in the most rare of situations have I ever seen Spider-Man taken by surprise. It is my guess that he has some sort of clairvoyant sense that warns him of danger, thus allowing his agility and strength to carry him out of harm's way. If this is true, this may be the secret key to his consistent success.



WAR OF THE GEMS

In the third quarter of 1996 fans of such heroes as Wolverine, Spider-Man, Captain America, Iron Man and The Incredible Hulk are in for a real treat. Video game powerhouse, CAPCOM Entertainment, has joined forces with Marvel Comics to create MARVEL SUPER HEROES: WAR OF THE GEMS for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System. We at Marvel VISION got a chance to play an early version of the new title. Here's what we found:

The game carries you around the world in search of the Infinity Gems with Adam Warlock as your guide, giving you clues and useful information. Somehow the Infinity Gems: Time, Space, Power, Reality, Soul and Mind, have fallen to Earth and it's the player's job to retrieve them. At your command are the previously mentioned characters. Each hero is armed with a phenomenal array of special attacks. Players must survive in the steamy heart of the Amazon River Basin, the icy mountain peaks of Alaska, the haunting and vile Dr. Doom's castle, being submerged in the frigid depths of the Boston Aquarium, and a test of fighting skills in the Avengers Mansion in order to obtain all six gems.

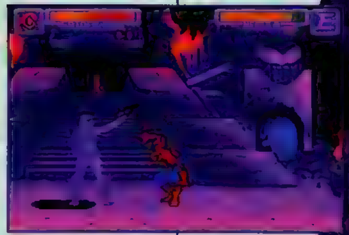
This isn't just a fighting game. It's a high quality, action-packed, side-scrolling adventure. The graphics are intense. The backgrounds and landscapes are on the money. Each character is perfectly rendered: their special moves are reminiscent of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby choreography. Cap throws his shield: Iron Man fires repulsor rays, has short-burst flying and an awesome aerial attack. The Hulk charges and smashes his victims, while Wolverine claws them to pieces with serious, mind-spinning combinations. The Canucklehead can also climb walls, spearing his Adamantium blades into vertical surfaces. Spider-Man's moves are nothing but classic. Wall-crawling, a web shooter attack, lightning fast moves and he can swing from just about anywhere into battle.

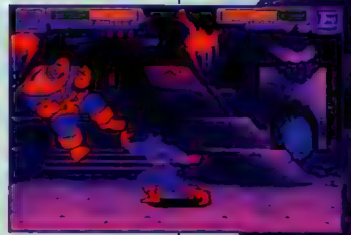
One important aspect of the game is that once you collect a gem you can use its power as your own. And it doesn't matter where you want to start looking for the gems either. You can start anywhere, and no level is easier than another. Did you think CAPCOM was going to make hunting for the Infinity Gems easy? There is also a password system to help bring you right back to where you left off in a previous round.

As far as villains go, there are more in this game than you can shake a stick at. However, they're not your ordinary villains, they're evil versions of some of the most classic super heroes. You'll face off against evil versions of Daredevil, Wolverine, Puck of Alpha Flight, Iron Man, She-Hulk, and The Vision. Yup, you may be facing your evil clone in this one. And those are just the foot soldiers—you still have to face the bosses. There's Dr. Doom, defending his castle in Latveria along with a swarm of killer robots. Evil Sasquatch is the colossal guardian of the Alaskan mountaintops, and if that isn't enough to get your juices flowing, infamous characters like Thanos, the Brood, and the demon Blackheart have joined forces to stomp your guts out.

Players beware, and be ready to fight for your life. The fate of the world is at stake and only you can win the WAR OF THE GEMS.

Tom Rolston





"A fantastic game—perhaps one of the finest comic book-licensed video games of all time." Tips & Tricks

"Editor's Choice Gold"—Electronic Gaming Monthly

Brushes with Excellence

Boris Vallejo & Julie Bell

He is the most renowned fantasy illustrator in the world. She is a former bodybuilder and his protégé. Together, Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell are the most talented husband and wife duo in sci-fi/fantasy art today. In December, Marvel Masterpieces 1996, a set of 100 trading cards painted by them, hits card stores everywhere. Recently, Marvel VISION phoned up Boris and Julie to discuss the cards, super heroes and pumping iron.

[illegible]

Julie: Beaumont, Texas.
Boris: (with heavy South American accent) Brooklyn, New York.

[illegible]

Boris: All right, you got me. Lima, Peru.

[illegible]

Julie: I had studied art for years. Even while I was making a living as a bodybuilder and personal trainer I had been doing art all along. I always knew someday that was what I was going to do full time, but I never knew any professional artists, so it just didn't seem all that real to me. Then I met Boris. When I watched him work it became real that this is what I wanted to do. I had studied mostly line drawing and figure work. Boris taught me how to paint.

[illegible]

Boris: I got a job at a chain of department stores illustrating their sales circular. I drew everything from pots and pans, to refrigerators and clothing. I got into fantasy art after I saw the work of Frank Frazetta back in the 60's. He had been doing these gorgeous covers for EERIE and CREEPY (two now defunct horror/fantasy comic magazines). I was always into bodybuilding and big, voluptuous women, so when I saw his stuff I fell in love. I painted a sample piece in that style, brought it to Jim Warren, the publisher of CREEPY, and he bought it. I did several covers for him over the years.
Julie: ...but the calendar people don't love it...
Boris: No, in 15 years they still haven't gotten it.

Do you guys work together?

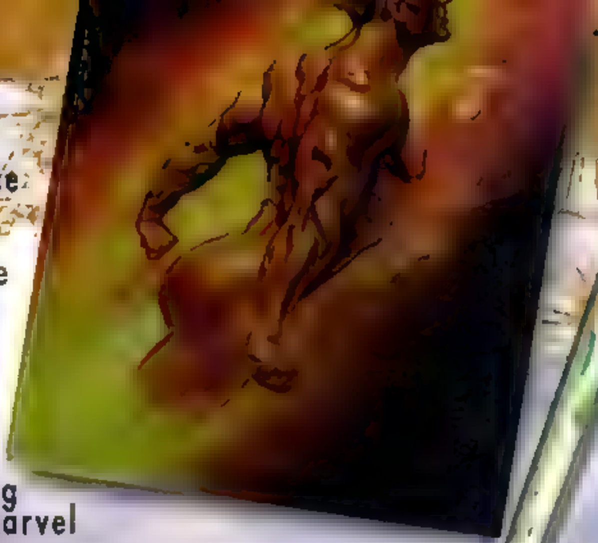
Boris: Yes, we share the same studio and sit in separate corners. As a matter of fact that's where we are right now...
Julie: ...I'm currently working on a poster for Marvel of the X-Women: Rogue, Storm, Phoenix and Psylocke...
Boris: ...and I'm supposed to be working on the next calendar.

Doesn't working that closely make for a competitive atmosphere?

Boris: Yes, we're very competitive when it comes to painting. I look over at her stuff and say, "Oh, so you're trying to make me look bad, eh?..."
Julie: ...and then when one of us goes out of the room, the other does something to the painting to slow 'em down a little bit...
Boris: ...fingerprints on the face...
Julie: ...accidentally knock it on the floor...
Boris & Julie: (laughter)
Boris: We have a really good, clean, healthy competition. I think it's wonderful. We are constantly pushing each other to be better rather than to think in terms of who is better. Besides, it goes on a painting-by-painting basis; sometimes mine's a little better, sometimes it's hers. Unfortunately, Julie tends to get better all the time!

Are you also competitive in the gym?

Boris: Heck no! I've been working out for almost 40 years, but the difference between me and Julie is that I don't have the genetics to be a great bodybuilder and she does.

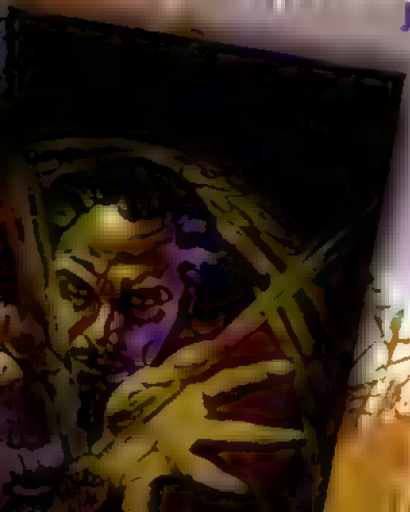


There is no way in the world I'm going to compete with her. I'm not crazy!
Julie: We don't really work out together... just at the same time.

Julie: I was married to a big comics fan who got me into reading Marvel Comics. I was always fascinated by comics because it was all figure drawing which I loved to do, so I always had that in the back of my mind. Some years later I took samples up to Marvel. I started getting work painting covers; in fact I was the first woman to ever paint a CONAN cover. After that I got a job painting a couple of pieces for an earlier set of Marvel Masterpieces trading cards.

Boris: I had worked for Marvel many years ago doing CONAN covers; then when I saw the super hero work Julie was doing, it looked like so much fun I really wanted to do it too. Finally I got a call from Fleer/SkyBox (the trading card people) and jumped at the opportunity.
[illegible]
Boris: Super heroes have so much more flair, more campiness...
Julie: ...we get to use brighter colors and exaggerated proportions...
Boris: they're way bigger than life and that's something truly special.
[illegible]
Julie: Yes, I read UNCANNY X-MEN, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, DR. STRANGE and SILVER SURFER. Howard the Duck is also an old favorite.
Boris: I haven't learned how to read English yet.(laughter)
Is it true that you hired models for all of the Marvel Masterpieces 1996 cards?
Boris: Yes, we use either professional models or bodybuilders for everything.
Julie: Also a lot of fitness competitors I know from my competing days.
Boris: We've used many Mr. Worlds and Mr. Universes. In this set we used Hakim Albrecht who competed in the Olympics, and bodybuilders Debbie Kruk, Linda Murray, Modela Duncan and of course the great Julie Bell...

Julie: Yes, I posed for Boris's Crystal and Spider-Man (the one on the building).You know, I thought Spidey had awfully good looking legs...
Boris & Julie: (laughter)
Boris: We use models as a reference tool. We use them to get the form, the shadows and the attitude right. Then we go off on our own--it's all part of the fun.
Julie: Absolutely, in fact it's the ones you change and modify that are the most exciting to do. Then you're not just copying a figure, you have to add a little "magic."
That's why it's more fun to work on comic book characters, because you can just let your imagination fly.
How long did it take to paint the set?
About a year and a half...
Julie: ...on and off.
And how long does it take per painting?
Boris: It varies greatly...
Julie: ...anywhere from 4-5 hours to 4-5 days.
What are your favorite pieces in the set?
Boris: Spider-Man, Jean Grey and Storm.
Julie: Dr. Strange. Silver Sable and the gray Hulk.
If you could be any hero, who would it be?



Julie: Storm.
Boris: I'd be Storm also so I could look at myself in the mirror all the time. (laughter)
Julie: How about Silver Surfer?
Boris: No, I'm afraid of heights...
Julie: Dr. Strange? He's poetic like you...
Boris: No...
Julie: How about Spider-Man?
Boris: Yes, maybe Spider-Man. But only if you could have Julie's legs.
Boris & Julie: (laughter)

—Matt Morra has legs like the Thing

ALEX ROSS

Memories

Alex Ross. The name conjures images of heroes who hadn't yet lost their innocence and others who are just again discovering theirs. His painted work on the genesis of the Marvel Universe in MARVELS endeared him to a ton of creators and fans alike. His apocalyptic warning of Kingdom Come continues to garner conversation regarding what makes a hero. He's one of the hottest creators in comics today and we dared to ask the question...

ALEX ROSS...WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST MARVEL COMIC BOOK?

"I'm really not sure. It was probably an issue of SPIDEY SUPER STORIES. It was the only book my mom would let me read at 4 years old. I remember liking Mr. Rogers at the time, but couldn't believe it when he openly attacked comics and super heroes on a PBS special. He talked about how bad they were... how violent. So, SPIDEY SUPER STORIES was the only book I was allowed to get. The funny thing is, Mr. Rogers was wrong then. The heroes were pure and perfect. I think he would be right if he looked at comics today."

WHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL COMICS YOU'VE EVER READ?

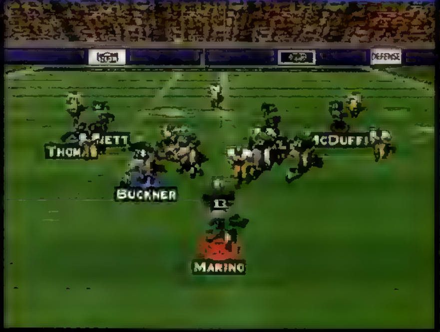
"It's not that it's the only comic that ever struck me, but the GARGOYLE limited series by J.M. DeMatteis and Mark Badger is one of those books that I can't believe is not appreciated. I bought it in a bargain box and was able to get all 4 issues for a buck. I got 'em for the Bernie Wrightson cover and figured the interiors were going to be lame. The thing was, it was like no other comic I had read until that point. It's about this guy being haunted by his own tragic obsession for this woman. And because he couldn't let her go, she was trapped between life and death. It had demons and monsters and was really about love."

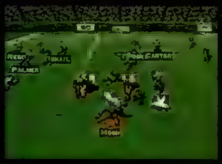
"It had all these moments set against real history that made it, I don't know... more real than what I expected. It's actually one of the only comic books I've read that after reading it, I wished that I could repaint it myself. I would have loved doing this story."

FIRST WORK AT MARVEL?

"An issue of Clive Barker's Hellraiser."

This isn't a game, it's a war. So be prepared for battle. Now, enough military analogies, let's talk football. This is NFL GameDay '97. It's better than any football game ever created. The artificial intelligence in this game is unmatched. Players on the field think, react and perform like they do in the NFL. [illegible] and offenses learn your tendencies and key on them. [illegible], there are no bread and butter plays to go to on [illegible]. You'll go head-on with real defensive coverages [illegible] packages and Dallas' Cover 4. Defensive fronts attack [illegible] line with stunts and swim techniques. And with new larger players you'll see guards and tackles trapping and pulling. This game is loaded with features too. This is real football, baby. So welcome to the NFL.





For game hints call 1-900-933-SONY(7669). The charge is $0.95 per minute. Callers under the age of 18 must get parental permission to call. Touch-tone phone is required. Available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. U.S. only. The Sony Computer Entertainment logo is a trademark of Sony Corporation. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. U R NOT E is a trademark of Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. NFL and GameDay are registered trademarks of the National Football League. Officially licensed product of the NFL Players and NFL Properties. NFL team names, logos, helmet designs and uniform designs are registered trademarks of the team indicated. ©/TM 1996 NFLP. The Players Inc logo is an official trademark of the NFL Players. © 1996 Players Inc. Developed by Sony Interactive Studios America. © 1996 Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. **www.sony.com** PANCAKE

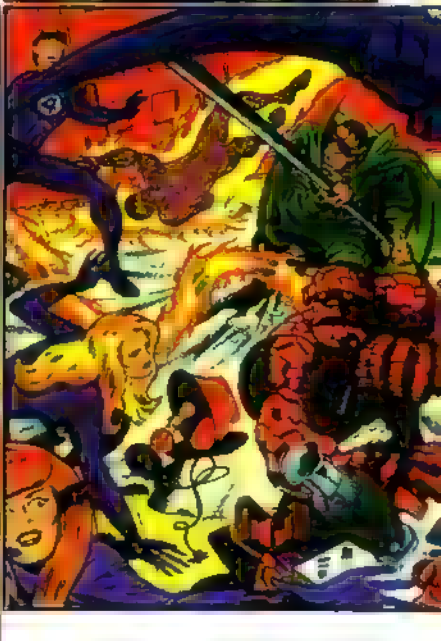
With the dawn of 1970 not only were the Sixties over but the Silver Age of Comics, the first phase of "the Marvel Age of Comics," was likewise fast drawing to a close. The great explosion of creativity that marked Marvel's first decade was fading, and, with a few notable exceptions like Roy Thomas, the next generation of writers and artists, who had been inspired by the brilliance of 1960s Marvel Comics, had yet to arrive.

Marvel Chronicles 1970

Perhaps the event that truly marked the end of Marvel's Silver Age was the departure of Jack Kirby, without whose revolutionary, dynamic artwork and dazzling concepts "The Marvel Age of Comics" would be unimaginable. Though still graced by wonderful graphics, his final issues of THE FANTASTIC FOUR are mere shadows of the greatness of the book in the 1960s. Still, in issue #94, Kirby and Lee created yet one more of the FF's memorable, long-running characters: the grandmotherly witch Agatha Harkness, who became young Franklin's governess. How a scientist like Reed Richards ever learned about her has still never been explained.

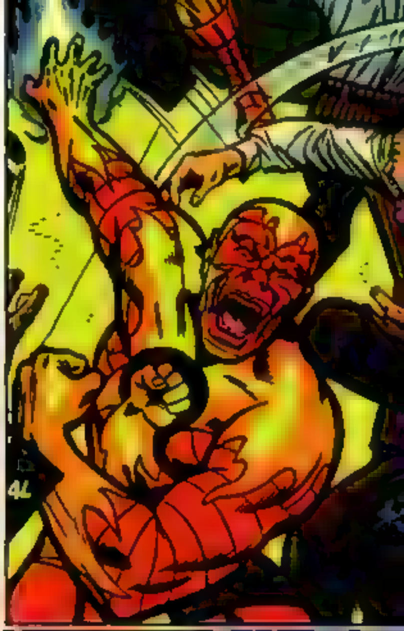
Kirby left Marvel after completing issue #102, which began a new storyline in which Magneto persuaded the Sub-Mariner to lead a new Atlantean attack on the surface world; it remained for Stan Lee and the series's new artist, John Romita Sr., to have Namor join with the FF in defeating the Machiavellian mutant.

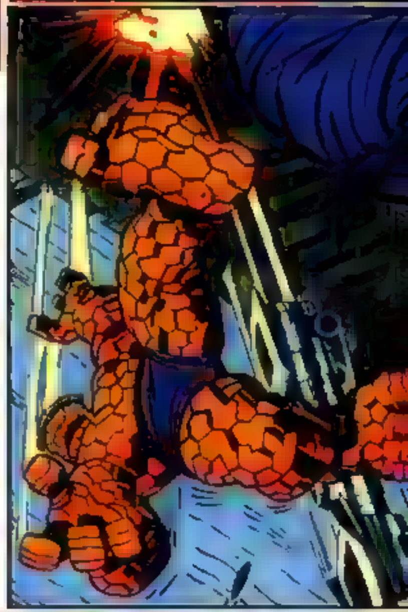
In THOR Lee and Kirby produced another last great epic. The Thunder God led the forces of Asgard against the gigantic fire demon Surtur. This tale must have deeply impressed writer/artist Walter Simonson, who constructed his own first great THOR storyline around Surtur decades later. Here too Kirby left after beginning a new storyline in which Loki switched bodies with Thor. In this case Stan Lee finished the story in collaboration with penciler Neal Adams, who was then at the height of his artistic prowess.

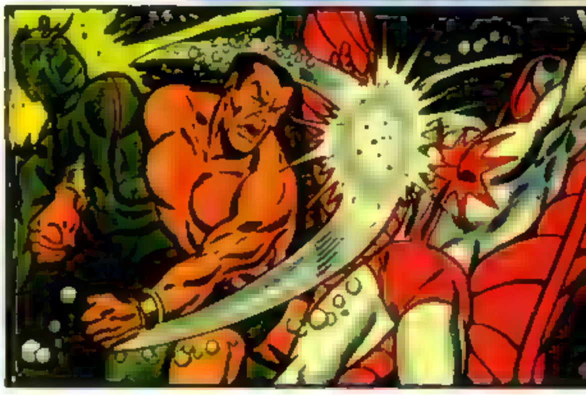


Signs that Marvel's Silver Age creativity was flagging were on view in some surprising places. It was not a memorable year for CAPTAIN AMERICA, in which the Falcon continued to make guest appearances, or for DAREDEVIL, in which the hero's girlfriend Karen Page inaugurated her ill-fated career as an actress, even appearing on "Strange Secrets," a daytime Gothic soap opera that presumably was writer Roy Thomas's nod to the original "Dark Shadows," then still in production.

IRON MAN began the year well, as writer Archie Goodwin chronicled how Tony Stark's girlfriend Janice Cord was killed in the midst of Iron Man's battle against the new







Crimson Dynamo and the Titanium Man. But afterwards that series likewise rapidly sank into mediocrity.

SUB-MARINER did not have his best year, either, but Roy Thomas still gave the series some of its highlights in 1970. DOCTOR STRANGE had abruptly been cancelled the year before just as Thomas and Gene Colan had embarked on a very promising storyline concerning the Undying Ones, otherdimensional creatures who once ruled Earth and now sought to return. They were inspired by the "Cthulhu mythos" originated in the short stories of the great horror writer H. P. Lovecraft. In SUB-MARINER #22 Namor journeyed to Boston, where he encountered Strange still on the track of his new nemeses. Strange vanished into their own realm at the issue's end, and the story would soon resume in yet another Marvel series.

Stan Lee and Herb Trimpe began the year in THE INCREDIBLE HULK by continuing their three-part epic about the return of his archenemy, the Leader. As he had so often before, Roy Thomas soon took over the writing reins from Stan, and his first major task was to finish off the Undying Ones saga. Cultists sent the Hulk into the Undying Ones dimension, where he found the entrapped Doctor Strange and defeated their leader, the Nameless One. One of the cultists was a young woman named Barbara Norriss, whose body would later become the host for the spirit of Brunnhilda the Valkyrie, who would be introduced later that same year in THE AVENGERS. On returning with Banner to Earth, Strange declared that having won this victory he was now retiring as Sorcerer Supreme. Readers surely found this hard to believe, and Strange would soon return to the mystic arts, but not this year.

In HULK #130 Thomas split the Green Goliath into separate beings for the first time: Bruce Banner coexisting with a savage Hulk out to destroy him. The two merged back into a single entity by issue #131, which also introduced the Hulk's new kid sidekick, an African-American from the Watts section of Los Angeles named Jim Wilson.

But there were some Marvel series in 1970 that had much more success in escaping the creative doldrums. Stan Lee and John Romita Sr. were still at the helm of THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN. True, this book too had its share of disappointments that year, like the story that introduced one of Spidey's lamer antagonists, an Australian high-jumper named (what else?) the Kangaroo. But the high spots in 1970 more than made up for such misfires.

In issues #83 through #85 of AMAZING the Web-Slinger found himself caught in the middle of a conflict between the Kingpin and a mysterious new criminal mastermind, the Schemer. The latter proved to be the Kingpin's son Richard, in the first of a series of masked identities he would adopt in the years to come.

In the following issue Spider-Man encountered the recently reformed Black Widow, whom series artist John Romita Sr. gave a brand new look, with a skin-tight black jumpsuit reminiscent of that worn by Mrs. Peel in television's "The Avengers." The Widow's hair also changed, from black to red without explanation or even comment, leaving readers ever since to puzzle over whether she was a natural brunette or redhead.

The most significant event in Spider-Man's life that year, though, occurred in issue #90. It

was one of the tragedies that have indelibly marked Peter Parker's life. During a furious battle between Spider-Man and Doctor Octopus atop a building, the Doctor caused heavy debris to plummet from the roof. Below, watching the combatants, was retired police captain George Stacy, the kindly father of Peter Parker's beloved Gwen. Alarmed, the crippled Stacy pushed a child out of the path of the falling debris, only to be struck down by it himself. Spider-Man rushed to the captain's side, and was startled when with his final breaths the dying man addressed him as Peter. Captain Stacy had known his secret but had not betrayed him, and had thus given his blessing to Spider-Man loving his daughter.

Ironically, the public initially blamed Spider-Man for the respected police captain's demise. The reverberations of this landmark in Spider-Man's life continued to be felt a quarter century later. The final issue of Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross's MARVELS shows how photojournalist Phil Sheldon sought to clear Spider-Man of the charge of murdering George Stacy, only to become a witness to the death of Gwen. And Captain Stacy's brother Arthur, introduced in 1971, has recently returned to the Spider-Books to reopen the investigation of Captain Stacy's death.

The redesigned Black Widow won her own series in AMAZING ADVENTURES, one of the two new "split books" Marvel launched in 1970. Each of them featured two series, much as books like TALES OF SUSPENSE had in the 1960s. The Widow shared AMAZING ADVENTURES with THE INHUMANS by Lee and Kirby.

But even more interesting was its sister title ASTONISHING TALES. The lead feature here was KA-ZAR, which also originally was crafted by Lee and Kirby. But no sooner had Kirby drawn the second installment, which introduced the strange being called Garokk the Petrified Man, than he left this series and Marvel as well. It was left to two newcomers to chart the history of how an English sailor of the 15th Century had been transformed into the immortal godlike creature: writer Gerry Conway and penciler Barry Smith, today known as Barry Windsor-Smith.

Yet perhaps the finest of these new "split book" series was DOCTOR DOOM in ASTONISHING TALES, illustrated by the legendary Wally Wood. In the early issues Doom faced a revolt led by the true heir to the Latverian throne, Prince Rudolfo, and his insect-like alien ally, the Faceless One.

Of the core Marvel series, the one that had the best year by far in 1970 was THE AVENGERS. Roy Thomas, the first of a new generation of Marvel writers, continued to work at the height of his creativity, often in collaboration this year with the premier art team in AVENGERS history, John Buscema and Tom Palmer [For more on Tom, see last issue.—Tim].

The year began with issue #72, which not only resolved the mystery of the identity of Nick Fury's archfoe Scorpio, but also resurrected Fury himself after he had seemingly been assassinated in the final issue of the original SHIELD series. Scorpio had been Fury's brother Jake, and Nick took over his costumed identity in order to bring the rest of his criminal organization out into the open. This was the first appearance of Zodiac whose dozen leaders costumed themselves after those twelve astrological signs.

The next two issues pitted the Avengers in a return match against the Sons of the Serpent, a legion of costumed racists surely inspired by the real-life Ku Klux Klan. In the course of this storyline the Black Panther, a new addition to the Avengers, revealed to the American public that he was a black man, although one might have thought his costumed alias had been a dead giveaway.

BY PETER SANDERSON

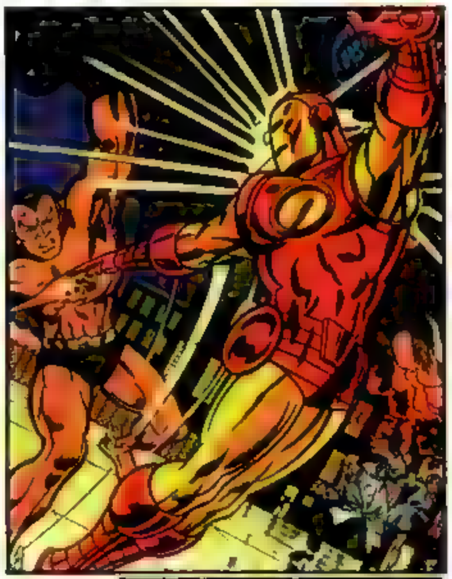
Issue #80 introduced Marvel's first Native American super hero, Red Wolf. In the extraordinary issue #82 Daredevil teamed with the Avengers when Zodiac's mercenary army succeeded in invading and capturing all of Manhattan. What is perhaps most amazing from the viewpoint of today's readers is that this epic adventure was completely and satisfactorily told in but a single issue; today it would probably be done over twenty issues in three months!

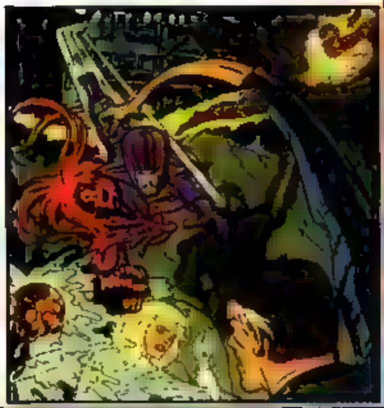
The final issue of 1970, #83, featured the first Marvel appearance of Brunnhilda the Valkyrie, as well as being Marvel's first story set at the Rutland, Vermont Halloween Parade, a legendary event for comics fans of that period, in which fans and the new generation of fans-turned-pros would ride on floats dressed as their favorite super heroes and super-villains.

October 1970 brought a true milestone in Marvel history: the first issue of CONAN THE BARBARIAN. This was a revolutionary step for Marvel. Although we now tend to think of Marvel as publishing primarily super hero comics, back in the 1960s and early 1970s the company was also doing other genres, like war books (SGT. FURY) and humor (NOT BRAND ECCH). Major artists like John Buscema and John Romita Sr. were drawing romance comics for Marvel simultaneously with their classic work on the super hero books. Still, CONAN represented a genre nearly unseen in comics up to that time.

Back in the 1930s a relatively obscure man of tremendous imagination named Robert E. Howard created a new genre of fiction now known as sword and sorcery, in which a brawny hero of a past era pits his courage and skill with weapons against eerie supernatural menaces. Before his death at an early age, Howard created many protagonists for the short stories he wrote for pulp magazines like "Weird Tales," the greatest of whom was Conan, a barbarian who lived in a time before recorded history, who roamed his world, combatting grotesque monsters, malevolent sorcerers, and cruel despots, finally making himself the king of the greatest nation of his day.

With the end of the pulp magazines, Howard and Conan had faded into obscurity. But in the 1960s Howard's Conan stories were reissued in a now legendary series of paperbacks, along with new stories by L. Sprague DeCamp and Lin Carter, filling in gaps in Conan's history. With a great deal of effort Roy Thomas persuaded Marvel to license the comics rights to the character; he would be the sole writer on the series for the next decade. During the series's initial years it was illustrated by Barry Smith, a new English artist who was as deeply influenced by the British fine art of the 19th and early 20th century as he was by the work of Jack Kirby. As a result Smith drew CONAN in a style the like of which comics readers had never seen before, wedding the character's savage power and the grotesquerie of his monstrous adversaries to a milieu of elegant, other worldly beauty.





If 1970 was a beginning for one classic Marvel series, it also spelled the end for another. Impossible as it may be for today's readers to believe, 1970 was the year that THE X-MEN was cancelled. For the past year the work of writer Roy Thomas, penciler Neal Adams, and inker Tom Palmer had made this a cutting edge comic, one of the very best being published. But apparently this burst of creative excellence came too late to prevent The Powers That Were from condemning the book.

As one might expect, THE X-MEN went out with a bang. Issue #64 introduced the Japanese mutant Sunfire, who was then bent on obliterating Washington, DC in retaliation for the wartime bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Issue #65 was a true landmark in X-MEN history; illustrated by Neal Adams and Tom Palmer and scripted by Denny O'Neil, it not only marked the official entry of Havok and Lorna Dane, the future Polaris, into the X-Men, but also resurrected Professor Xavier, who had been killed off many months before.

It was explained that Xavier had allowed the X-Men's former enemy, the shapechanging Changeling, to impersonate him, and that it was the Changeling, then, who had perished in preventing Grotesk from destroying the planet. The real Professor had been busy elsewhere preparing to combat a still greater menace.

And what could have been a greater threat than Grotesk's earthquake machine? It was an invasion by a race of aliens named the Z'nox. In extraordinary graphics Adams showed how the Professor psychically linked the minds of everyone on the planet to provide the monumental psionic force necessary to drive off the Z'nox.

After all that, the final issue, #65, came as something of an anticlimax, as the X-Men faced off against the Hulk in Las Vegas in the course of saving the life of the Professor, who had exerted himself nearly to the point of death in repelling the Z'nox.

And that was that.Over the next half-decade the X-Men would pop up as guest stars in various Marvel series, and the Beast would even get his own short-lived series in AMAZING ADVENTURES. But, as far as readers could tell, the X-Men were basically finished as stars of their own series. No one in 1970 could foresee the team returning with an almost entirely new line-up in 1975. And certainly no one would have ever dreamt that by the 1980s THE X-MEN would become Marvel's best-selling series.

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HEROES

ON SALE MARCH 5

CODE OF HONOR NO.4 (OF 4)

CHUCK DIXON/BRAD PARKER

CONCLUDING THE FULLY-PAINTED LOOK AT THE MODERN MARVEL UNIVERSE! POLICE OFFICER JEFF PIPER FIGURES HE'S SEEN IT ALL IN THE SUPERHERO PLAYGROUND KNOWN AS NEW YORK CITY, BUT HE'S NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THE PHENOM KNOWN AS THE DARK PHOENIX! WRITER **CHUCK DIXON** TAKES READERS ON A STREET-LEVEL TOUR OF KEY EVENTS IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE FROM THE '60S TO TODAY IN THIS ALL-NEW, FULLY-PAINTED BOOKSHELF LIMITED SERIES. IN THIS FINAL ISSUE, DIXON TEAMS WITH CODE OF HONOR COVER ARTIST **BRAD PARKER**, WHO MIXES COMPUTER ENHANCED PHOTOGRAPHY WITH PAINT TO CREATE A UNIQUE ART EXPERIENCE.

DAREDEVIL NO.364

KARL KESEL/CARY NORD/MATT RYAN

YOUNG, MANIC AND HOMICIDAL, THE RAMPAGE OF THE STRANGE WOMAN NAMED INSOMNIA CONTINUES, PITTING HER HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH-KAREN PAGE?! PLUS: DAREDEVIL GETS CLOSER TO THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE BEHIND WFSK!

FANTASTIC FOUR NO.7

JIM LEE & BRANDON CHOI/BRETT BOOTH/TOM MCWEENEY

THE FANTASTIC FOUR DARE TO ENTER THE NEGATIVE ZONE, ONLY TO ENCOUNTER THE FURY OF BLASTAAR! WHEN THEY EMERGE, IT'S INTO A STRANGE, NEW WORLD! "...IT'S TERRIFIC! JIM LEE DESERVES A BIG OL' HEAP OF PRAISE FOR THIS...THE STORY IS EXCITING, THE CHARACTERS ARE BELIEVABLE AND INTERESTING...IT'S NOT AN ART-HEAVY BOOK THAT YOU CAN READ IN FIVE MINUTES." (*Combo*)

KA-ZAR NO.1

MARK WAID/ANDY KUBERT

• **THE CONCEPT:** THERE IS A LOST WORLD WHERE EVEN TODAY DINOSAURS LIVE. WHERE THE MISTS OF TIME SWIRL TO REVEAL A NATURAL BORN JURASSIC PARK. UNTOUCHED BY THE GREAT ICE AGE, UNSCATHED BY TIME, UNDONE BY PROGRESS. A PLACE WHERE THE STRONG SURVIVE AND THE WEAK ARE EXTINCT. A WORLD CALLED THE SAVAGE LAND, HOME TO A MAN NAMED KA-ZAR, HEIR TO AN ENGLISH FORTUNE. ABANDONED IN THIS HARSH WORLD AS A SMALL CHILD, HE WAS RAISED BY ZABU, A MIGHTY SABRETOOTH TIGER, NOW HIS FAITHFUL COMPANION. JOINED BY HIS WIFE, SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL, KA-ZAR STRUGGLES AGAINST EVIL FORCES THAT PLOT TO CORRUPT THIS PRIMORDIAL GARDEN OF EDEN.

• **THE CHARACTERS:** THE FIRST ISSUE INTRODUCES OUR (VINE) SWINGING STARS, KA-ZAR, SHANNA AND ZABU. AND WHAT WOULD HEROES BE WITHOUT VILLAINS? EVIL ARRIVES IN THE FORM OF GREGOR, THE MENTOR OF KRAVEN THE HUNTER, AND HIS EMPLOYER A MYSTERIOUS FOE FROM KA-ZAR'S PAST.

• **THE CREATORS:** KA-ZAR REUNITES THE MEGA-COOL TEAM OF **MARK WAID AND ANDY KUBERT**, WHO WORKED TOGETHER BRIEFLY ON X-MEN. WAID, CURRENTLY CAMPED OUT ON WIZARD'S "TOP 10 HOTTEST WRITERS" LIST, GARNERED CRITICAL ACCLAIM ON TITLES SUCH AS CAPTAIN AMERICA AND KINGDOM COME. ANDY KUBERT LOCKED IN "FAN-FAVORITE" STATUS DURING HIS HIGH-PROFILE 6-YEAR RUN ON THE POPULAR X-MEN.

• **THE FORMAT:** 40-PAGE FIRST ISSUE!

ON SALE MARCH 12

AVENGERS NO.7
ROB LIEFELD & JEPH LOEB/IAN CHURCHILL/ JON SIBAL
AT PRESS TIME, NO INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE.

GHOST RIDER NO.85
IVAN VELEZ JR./POP MHAN/JOHN LOWE
LILITH, THE DAUGHTER OF DRACULA, GOES ALL-OUT SAVAGE WITH BLOOD LUST! MEANWHILE, THE SCARECROW TAKES CONTROL OF THE BODY OF GHOST RIDER!

INCREDIBLE HULK '97
CHRIS COOPER & BILL ROSEMANN/JEFF REBNER
TWO TERRIFYING TALES IN THIS 48-PAGE SPECIAL EXPLORE HOW, IN THE AFTERMATH OF ONSLAUGHT, THE HULK'S NEW 'TUDE IS GIVING KIDS GOOSE BUMPS! IN THE FIRST ACT, THE JADE GIANT RE-EXAMINES HIS OWN TWISTED RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FATHER IN THE EYES OF AN ALIEN CHANGELING! IN THE SECOND STORY, THE GREEN GOLIATH ENCOUNTERS A SPECIAL LITTLE BOY WHO BLAMES THE HULK FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HIS PARENTS, A BOY NAMED FRANKLIN RICHARDS!

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY NO.509
TOM DEFALCO/DEODATO STUDIOS
THE BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE OF ASGARD ERUPTS! AS THE LOST GODS BATTLE A FORMER ALLY, A CURRENT TEAMMATE SNEAKS OFF TO BETRAY THE GROUP! MEANWHILE, VOLSTAGG JOINS THE GOOD FIGHT AND THE TRUE IDENTITY OF ZHUNG IS REVEALED!

ON SALE MARCH 19

THE INCREDIBLE HULK NO.453
PETER DAVID/MIKE DEODATO/TOM WEGRZYN
ISOLATED ON HIS OWN ISLAND, THE GREEN GOLIATH TAKES ON THE BEING FROM THE FUTURE CALLING HIMSELF-THE HULK?! THIS FINAL CONFRONTATION WILL LEAD TO THE HULK ON THE RUN IN THE SAVAGE LAND AND NEXT ISSUE'S NEW PENCILER, WOLVERINE'S **ADAM KUBERT**!

IRON MAN NO.7
JIM LEE & SCOTT LOBDELL/WILCE PORTACIO/ SCOTT WILLIAMS
REVEALED: THE VILLAIN WHO'S BEEN SECRETLY MASTERMINDING IRON MAN'S DOWNFALL FROM THE BEGINNING! PLUS: A PERSONAL TRAGEDY STRIKES PEPPER POTTS, THANKS TO HER ATTEMPT TO PROTECT TONY STARK!

PUNISHER NO.19
JOHN OSTRANDER/TOM LYLE/ROBERT JONES
FROM THE PAGES OF DEADPOOL COMES THE TASKMASTER! WHILE FRANK CASTLE'S BURIED MEMORY SLOWLY RETURNS, HE TRIES TO PREVENT A NEIGHBORHOOD GUY FROM RETURNING TO A LIFE OF CRIME. BAD MOVE, FRANK, YOU JUST TICKED OFF THE GUY'S BOSS-WHO HAPPENS TO BE THE TERRIBLE TASKMASTER! MEANWHILE, THE GOVERNMENT TASK FORCE CLOSES IN ON OUR HERO!

THUNDERBOLTS NO.2
KURT BUSIEK/MARK BAGLEY/VINCE RUSSELL
THE MAD THINKER CRASHES A CEREMONY TO HONOR THE HEROES FALLEN IN THE ONSLAUGHT WAR AND KIDNAPS FRANKLIN, THE SON OF MR. FANTASTIC & THE INVISIBLE WOMAN! THE THINKER *THINKS* HE CAN USE HIM UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF THE MISSING FF,BUT HE DIDN'T COUNT ON THE INTERVENTION OF THE THUNDERBOLTS! PLUS: THE TEAM GETS THEIR FIRST TASTE OF FAME AND THEY LIKE IT!

HEROES cont. →

THUNDERBOLTS NO.2 (VARIANT COVER)
VARIANT COVER BY MARK BAGLEY & VINCE RUSSELL
INTRODUCING MARVEL'S "TWO-FOR-TWO" PROGRAM! THIS IS ISSUE 2, SO IT GET'S 2 COVERS! WARNING: THIS VARIANT COVER BY MARK BAGLEY AND VINCE RUSSELL *REVEALS THE TEAM'S SHOCKING SECRET!*

WHAT IF? NO.97
STARRING THE BLACK KNIGHT
JAMES FELDER/LEONARDO MANCO
HISTORY HAS CHANGED IRREVOCABLY. CAMELOT HAS FALLEN, BUT FROM THE ASHES, DOCTOR DOOM SEIZES CONTROL OF ENGLAND. THE FUTURE OF THE WESTERN WORLD LIES IN HIS GRASP, AND ONLY ONE MAN CAN STOP HIM A MAN WHO MUST FIND THE COURAGE TO BECOME THE BLACK KNIGHT!

ON SALE MARCH 26

2099: WORLD OF TOMORROW NO.9
JOE KELLY/DAVID BREWER/ROB HUNTER
THE REMNANTS OF HUMANITY IN THE SAVAGE LAND FACE THEIR GREATEST THREAT AT THE HANDS OF LUNATIKA AND HER WACKED OUT X-MEN!

CAPTAIN AMERICA NO.7
ROB LIEFELD & JEPH LOEB/ROB LIEFELD & DAN FRAGA
AT PRESS TIME, NO INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE.

ELEKTRA NO.7
PETER MILLIGAN/MIKE DEODATO JR./DEODATO STUDIOS
AN ARMY OF ASSASSINS ARE TURNING NYC INTO A BLOODBATH, AND THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY OUR ANTI-HERO CAN SURVIVE! THAT'S RIGHT, ELEKTRA'S BACK TO HER OLD WICKED WAYS! MEANWHILE, THE ANCIENT BEING KNOWN ONLY AS THE ARCHITECT OFFERS KONRAD WEISS WHAT HE'S ALWAYS WANTED-BUT TO GET IT, KONRAD WILL HAVE TO SELL OUT ELEKTRA!

MARVEL CHILLERS
STARRING THE HULK
WRITTEN BY MARK GRUENWALD
IF YOU LIKE GOOSEBUMPS, THEN YOU'LL LOVE MARVEL CHILLERS! THIS NOVEL, GEARED TOWARDS YOUNGER READERS, STARS THE GREEN GOLIATH IN A SUPER SPOOKY STORY. FEATURING ILLUSTRATIONS BY INCREDIBLE HULK ALUM, LIAM SHARP!

MARVEL VISION NO.18
THIS FULL-COLOR, COMIC-SIZED MAGAZINE FEATURES ARTICLES ON UPCOMING PROJECTS, INTERVIEWS WITH TOP CREATORS, A HUMAN TORCH "TIME SLIP" BY PHIL HESTER, A SNEAK PEEK AT THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN SUMMER FUN SPECIAL AND MORE COOL STUFF THAN HULK COULD SMASH! IF YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE READERS GET PUMPED FOR THE HOUSE OF IDEAS' UPCOMING OFFERINGS, MAKE SURE THEY CHECK OUT MARVEL VISION #18!

SILVER SURFER NO.128
J.M. DEMATTEIS/RON GARNEY/BOB WIACEK
THE FINAL SHOWDOWN BETWEEN THE SILVER SURFER AND THE PUPPET MASTER IS UNDERWAY AND THE OUTCOME MAY CHANGE THE SURFER FOREVER!

THE UNTOLD TALES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL NO.2 (OF 3)
TOM BREVOORT & MIKE KANTEROVICH/SCOTT KOLINS/ JOHN LOWE
CONTINUING THE EARLY DAYS OF THE LEGENDARY SPACE-FARING HERO! MAR-VELL'S QUEST FOR THE MISSING KREE MILITARY GENIUS RUNS INTO A SNAG WHEN HE CROSSES PATHS WITH DEATHBIRD AND THE IMPERIAL GUARD! AND BY THE TIME THIS STAR WAR IS OVER, THEY ALL MAY FALL VICTIM TO THE PARASITIC BROOD! 32 PAGES, NO ADS, TIES TO CURRENT X-MEN CONTINUITY, PLUS AN IN-DEPTH, PREVIOUSLY UNREVEALED LOOK AT A CLASSIC MARVEL HERO-COOL!

SPIDER-MAN

ON SALE MARCH 5

THE SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN NO.16
TODD DEZAGO/MIKE WIERINGO/RICHARD CASE

RETURNING FROM LAST ISSUE'S ADVENTURE IN THE SAVAGE LAND, PETER PARKER IS CONFRONTED BY A STRANGE LOOSE END FROM THE PAST OF THE LATE BEN REILLY. FROM SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #230 COMES THE MOLDY MONSTROSITY THAT WALKS LIKE A MAN! FEAR HAS A NAME, AND IT IS DK! PLUS: THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SUPPORTING CAST MEMBER!

ON SALE MARCH 12

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN NO.423
TOM DEFALCO/JOE BENNET/BUD LAROSA

THE NEWLY RECHARGED ELECTRO GOES AFTER SPIDER-MAN WITH LIGHTNING-QUICK FURY! MEANWHILE, WE DROP HINTS ABOUT THE RETURN OF A MAJOR AND QUITE DEAD SPIDEY FOE! PLUS: IS MARY JANE FLIRTING WITH ANOTHER MAN?!

MARVEL ADVENTURES NO.2
STARRING SPIDER-MAN
RALPH MACCHIO/BEN HERRERA

ON THE TRAIL OF A FUGITIVE VENOM, SPIDER-MAN RUNS ACROSS ONE OF HIS EVEN NASTIER FOES, THE SAVAGE SCORPION! THIS READER-FRIENDLY STAND ALONE STORY FEATURES WAY-COOL ANIMATED-STYLE ART BY **BEN HERERRA** (101 WAYS TO END THE CLONE SAGA)!

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN NO.21
KURT BUSIEK/PAT OLLIFFE/AL WILLIAMSON

• **THE CONCEPT:** BEFORE COLLEGE. BEFORE MARRIAGE. BEFORE THE CLONE SAGA. BEFORE ALL OF THIS THERE WAS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT NAMED PETER PARKER. BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, OUR BELOVED BOOKWORM GAINED THE ARACHNID'S POWERS, AND SOON BECAME THE COSTUMED CRIMEFIGHTER THE ENTIRE WORLD WOULD ONE DAY COME TO KNOW AS SPIDER-MAN! IN THE EARLY DAYS OF HIS CAREER, WHEN HIS AMAZING POWERS WERE STILL NEW TO HIM, THE TEENAGED SPIDER-MAN STRUGGLED TO LEARN ABOUT HIMSELF AND HIS ABILITIES, WHILE TRYING TO LEAD A NORMAL LIFE. IT WOULD NOT BE EASY.

• **THE CHARACTERS:** *THIS MONTH, SPIDEY TEAMS WITH THE ORIGINAL X-MEN!* CYCLOPS, BEAST, ICEMAN, THE ANGEL AND MARVEL GIRL LEND A HAND TO TAKE DOWN THE NEW VILLAIN NAMED MENACE! IS HE A MUTANT OR SOMETHING FAR, FAR WORSE?!

• **THE CREATORS: KURT BUSIEK,** ACCLAIMED WRITER OF MARVELS AND ASTRO CITY, DRAWS UPON HIS TALENT FOR RECAPTURING THE MAGIC OF THE PAST TO SPIN NEW TALES OF ADVENTURE. BUSIEK IS JOINED BY **PAT OLLIFFE,** WHOSE PENCILS EVOKE THE LOOK OF SPIDEY'S FIRST ARTIST, THE LEGENDARY STEVE DITKO.

• **THE FORMAT:** THE BEST BARGAIN IN COMICS CONTINUES WITH 32-PAGES OF NIFTY NOSTALGIA FOR ONLY 99 CENTS.

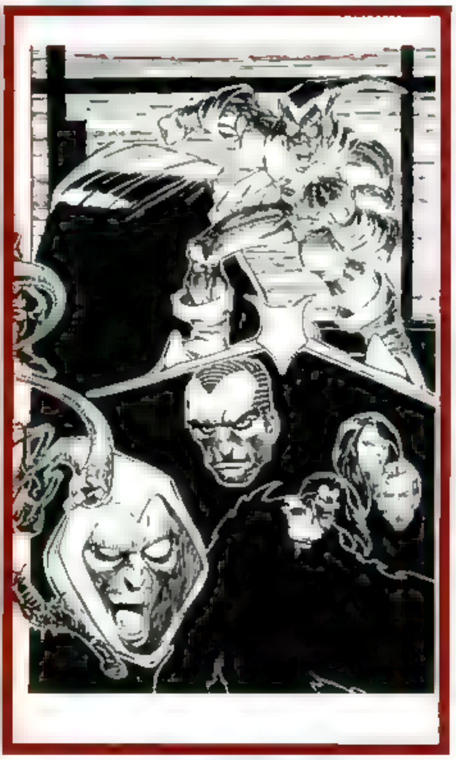
SPIDER-MAN cont. →

ON SALE MARCH 19

PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN NO.80

HOWARD MACKIE/JOHN ROMITA JR./SCOTT HANNA

THE MYSTERIOUS S.H.O.C. BLASTED ONTO THE SCENE IN PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN #76. NOW WE REVEAL THE MINDBLOWING SECRETS BEHIND HIS CREATION AND THE SUPER-SINISTER CONNECTIONS HE HAS TO FORTUNATO AND HYDRA!



ON SALE MARCH 26

THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN NO.246

J.M. DEMATTEIS/LUKE ROSS/JOHN STANISCI

AS IF THE HOPPING-MAD KANGAROO WASN'T PROBLEM ENOUGH FOR SPIDEY, NOW THE GARRULOUS GRIZZLY ATTACKS! KANGAROOS, GRIZZLIES AND SPIDERS, OH MY! PLUS: JACK-O-LANTERN PAYS A SPECIAL VISIT TO J. JONAH JAMESON!

SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED NO.16

MARK BERNARDO/JOE BENNET/TIM DZON

THE QUEST FOR THE CROWN OF LATVERIA BEGAN IN X-FORCE #64 AND CONTINUES HERE! REPORTER BETTY BRANT IS A PRISONER IN THE DOOM-LESS KINGDOM OF LATVERIA, NOW THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN SAVE HER FROM THE CLUTCHES OF DREADKNIGHT IS HER FIRST LOVE, PETER PARKER! SILVER SABLE AND HER WILDPACK TAG ALONG JUST IN CASE THINGS GO WRONG, AND IF YOU KNOW SPIDEY, THEY ALWAYS DO!

VENOM: ON TRIAL NO.3 (OF 3)

LARRY HAMA/JOSH HOOD/DEREK FISHER

GUEST-STARRING SPIDER-MAN, CARNAGE AND DAREDEVIL! VENOM'S MEDIA CIRCUS EXPLODES INTO AN ALL-OUT THROW DOWN IN THE CENTER RING! PLUS: VENOM IS OFFERED A FAUSTIAN DEAL TO SAVE HIS LIFE AND SECURE HIS FREEDOM, BUT WILL HE TAKE IT? AND IF HE DOES, WHAT WILL IT MEAN TO HIS STATUS QUO AND TO THE REST OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE?

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM YOUR FRIENDLY, NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN

X-MEN

ON SALE MARCH 5

CABLE NO.43

TODD DEZAGO/RANDY GREEN

THINK YOU KNOW CABLE? SO DID HE! BUT AS IMAGES OF HIS PAST, OUR FUTURE, COME BACK TO HAUNT HIM, NATHAN FINDS HIMSELF CONFRONTED WITH HORRIFIC MEMORIES BEST LEFT FORGOTTEN. THESE STARTLING REVELATIONS MARK A BOLD, NEW DIRECTION FOR ONE OF MARVEL'S MOST ENIGMATIC MUTANTS!

UNCANNY ORIGINS NO.9

STARRING STORM

JIM ALEXANDER/MARK CAMPOS

SHE IS THE MISTRESS OF THE HURRICANE, THE GODDESS OF THE LIGHTNING-SHE IS ORORO, THE MUTANT KNOWN AS STORM. NOW DELVE INTO THE HISTORY OF THIS POPULAR HERO AND LEARN HOW SHE ROSE FROM ORPHAN THIEF TO CO-LEADER OF THE X-MEN.

THE UNCANNY X-MEN NO.344

SCOTT LOBDELL/JOE MADUREIRA/TIM TOWNSEND

CONCLUDING THE X-MEN'S THREE-PART ADVENTURE IN SPACE! ROGUE, JOSEPH, GAMBIT, BISHOP AND THE BEAST TAKE A FINAL STAND AGAINST THE UNHOLY UNCREATED/PHALANX ALLIANCE! CAN GAMBIT AND JOSEPH, THE MUTANT FORMERLY KNOWN AS MAGNETO, PUT ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES IN THIS DARK HOUR? HOW DOES ROGUE BECOME THE KEY TO SAVING THE SHI'AR EMPIRE? AND AT WHAT COST TO HER LIFE?

ON SALE MARCH 12

BEAST NO.1 (OF 3)

KEITH GIFFEN/CEDRIC NOCON

THE CONCEPT: THE FORMER NEW MUTANT KNOWN AS KARMA IS DESPERATE. VIPER, THE FEMME FATALE THAT BROKE AWAY FROM HYDRA, HAS KIDNAPPED HER SIBLINGS TO GAIN VENGENCE ON THE COY FAMILY. NOW SHE'S GOING TO MUTATE THE KIDDIES THROUGH SPIRAL'S BODY SHOPPE, THE PLACE RESPONSIBLE FOR LADY DEATHSTRIKE AND THE REAVERS! IN X-FORCE #62, CABLE'S CORPS. ATTEMPTED TO FREE THE LITTLE TIKES, BUT FAILED. NOW IT'S TIME FOR KARMA TO SEEK HELP FROM THE MAJOR LEAGUES! SO SHE SEEKS OUT THE X-MEN, MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE ONE MAN WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT MUTATION THAN ANYONE ELSE, HANK MCCOY, THE BOUNCING, BLUE-HAIRED BEAST!

THE CHARACTERS: THE BEAST HAS AMASSED A FAN FOLLOWING THROUGH HIS YEARS OF ADVENTURING AS A MEMBER OF THE AVENGERS, THE DEFENDERS AND, OF COURSE, THE X-MEN. JOINING THE BEAST AND KARMA ON THIS HIGH-STAKES RESCUE MISSION IS KARMA'S EX-TEAMATE, THE YOUNGEST X-MAN OF THEM ALL, CANNONBALL! THEIR OPPOSITION: VIPER AND HER SIX-ARMED ASSASSIN, SPIRAL!

THE FORMAT: THREE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES; 32-PAGES PER ISSUE.

GENERATION X NO.27

SCOTT LOBDELL/CHRIS BACHALO

GENERATION X BARELY SURVIVES THEIR EXPERIENCE ON A LIFEBOAT, ONLY TO DISCOVER THEMSELVES ABOARD A NUCLEAR SUBMARINE! THE BAD NEWS: THE VESSEL'S ENTIRE ARSENEL IS AIMED DIRECTLY AT EUROPE! THE WORSE NEWS: NOT EVEN M CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO CHANGE ITS COURSE!

X-MEN cont.

X-FACTOR NO.134
HOWARD MACKIE/JEFF MATSUDA/ART THIBERT
CONTINUING "OPERATION X-FACTOR UNDERGROUND!" X-FACTOR'S BASE OF OPERATIONS AT FALL'S EDGE HAS BEEN OFFICIALY REGISTERED AS A CHEMICAL BIOHAZARD ZONE, LEAVING FORGE AND THE TEAM ALL THE SPACE THEY NEED TO FIGHT FOR XAVIER'S DREAM WITHOUT GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE.

ON SALE MARCH 19

ESSENTIAL WOLVERINE VOL. 2 TRADE PAPERBACK
NEW COVER BY ADAM KUBERT
512 PAGES OF CLASSIC WOLVERINE IN AN ALL-NEW, BARGAIN FORMAT! MARVEL CONTINUES ITS ESSENTIAL SERIES BY COLLECTING WOLVERINE #24-47 IN STARK BLACK-AND-WHITE ON GOOD OLD FASHIONED NEWSPRINT. **JOHN BUSCEMA, KLAUS JANSON, GENE COLAN, PETER DAVID, TOM PALMER, DAN GREEN, LARRY HAMA, MARC SILVESTRI** AND MORE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS UNIQUE ADDITION TO ANY MUTANT MANIAC'S LIBRARY!

EXCALIBUR NO.109
BEN RAAB/SALVADOR LARROCA/SCOTT KOBLISH
SPIRAL, THAT SIX-ARMED BABE FROM THE MOJO-VERSE, CONFRONTS EXCALIBUR WHILE CAPTAIN BRITAIN'S LIFE HANGS BY A FRAYING THREAD! PLUS: AN UNEARTHLY SPECTRE HAUNTS MEGGAN! ***(NOTE: SPIRAL'S DANCE OF DEATH CONTINUES IN THIS MONTH'S BEAST #1 & WOLVERINE #113!)***

X-MAN NO.27
TERRY KAVANAGH/ROGER CRUZ/BUD LAROSA
CONCLUDING THE THREE-PART HELLFIRE CLUB SAGA! THE NEWLY-FORMED BROTHERHOOD,RUN BY HAVOK, CYCLOP'S RENEGADE BROTHER, IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN! ANY GUESSES WHO ONE OF THEIR RECRUITS IS? YEP, THE ONE AND ONLY NATE GREY!

X-MEN NO.64
SCOTT LOBDELL/CARLOS PACHECO/ART THIBERT
WOLVERINE, STORM, CYCLOPS, PHOENIX AND CANNONBALL HAVE TWO CHOICES, AND NEITHER OF THEM ARE GOOD! DO THEY SIDE WITH THE EVIL OF SABASTIAN SHAW, INTENT UPON UNITING THE INNER CIRCLE OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB, OR WITH THE ALL-NEW, ALL-POWERFUL KINGPIN? PLUS: ONE OF THE MOST UNEXPECTED MUTANTS OF ALL TIME TAKES HER PLACE IN THE HELLFIRE CLUB AS THE NEW BLACK QUEEN!

ON SALE MARCH 26

DEADPOOL NO.5
JOE KELLY/ED MCGUINNESS & KEVIN LAU/NATHAN MASSENGILL
GUEST-STARRING X-FORCE'S SIRYN! DEADPOOL'S FOUGHT OFF THE HULK, BUT HE'S STILL DYING AND THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN SAVE HIM IS THE GUY THAT MADE HIM INTO A MONSTER! PLUS: SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME WITH T-RAY, A MYSTERIOUS MAN FROM DEADPOOL'S PAST!

MARVEL CHILLERS
STARRING WOLVERINE
WRITTEN BY LARRY HAMA
IF YOU LIKE *GOOSEBUMPS*, THEN YOU'LL LOVE MARVEL CHILLERS! THIS NOVEL, GEARED TOWARDS YOUNGER READERS, STARS THE MOST POPULAR X-MAN OF THEM ALL IN A SUPER SPOOKY STORY. WRITTEN BY WOLVERINE SCRIBE, LARRY HAMA!

WOLVERINE NO.113
LARRY HAMA/ANTHONY WINN
FEATURING THE RETURN OF OGUN, THE DEMON MASKED WARRIOR FROM THE KITTY PRYDE & WOLVERINE LIMITED SERIES! KITTY COMES TO THE EAST VILLAGE TO SEEK OUT LOGAN, WHAT SHE FINDS IS THE MAN WHO ONCE ATTEMPTED TO STEAL HER SOUL! MEANWHILE, LADY DEATHSTRIKE AND SPIRAL WAIT IN THE WINGS!

X-FORCE NO.66
JOHN FRANCIS MOORE/ADAM POLLINA
RISQUE, THE WOMAN WARPATH THOUGHT HE LOVED, LEADS X-FORCE ON A WILD RIDE THROUGH AN AMUSEMENT PARK! MEANWHILE, THE MISSING JAMES PROUDSTAR FINDS HIMSELF THE PRISONER OF A RADICALLY ALTERED MUTANT FROM THE X-MEN'S PAST.

X-MEN '97
JOHN FRANCIS MOORE/STEVE EPTING
STARRING GAMBIT, JOSEPH AND PHOENIX! IN "NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY", EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING VERY WELL IN THE X-UNIVERSE, TOO WELL, IN FACT! GAMBIT AND JOSEPH, THE MUTANT FORMERLY KNOWN AS MAGNETO, KNOW SOMETHING'S UP AND THEY'RE RIGHT! BUT CAN THESE FORMER ENEMIES UNITE TO FIND JEAN GREY, WHO'S MYSTERIOUSLY MISSING?

MEDIA

ON SALE MARCH 12

HARVEY PRESENTS: CASPER NO.1

VARIOUS

THE FRIENDLIEST GHOST OF THEM ALL RETURNS! THIS 48-PAGE, MAGAZINE-SIZED DEBUT ISSUE FEATURES HAUNTINGLY GOOD TALES STARRING CASPER! GET GOOSEBUMPS AS CASPER, KAT AND GHOST THERAPIST DR. HARVEY CONTEND WITH STINKY, STRETCH AND FATSO, THE GHOSTLY TRIO!

ON SALE MARCH 19

DOCTOR WHO NO.250

VARIOUS

THE OFFICIAL, FULL-COLOR PHOTO MAGAZINE FEATURING INTERVIEWS, ARTICLES AND COMICS CELEBRATING THE MANY LIVES OF THE LEGENDARY DOCTOR WHO!

STAR TREK

ON SALE MARCH 5

STAR TREK®: VOYAGER™ NO.7

BEN RAAB/JESUS REDONDO/SERGIO MELIA

WHY MUST CAPTAIN JANEWAY FORGE AN UNEASY ALLIANCE WITH A BAND OF HER MOST DREADED ENEMIES? BECEAUSE THE RACE IS ON FOR AN ANCIENT RELIC THAT GIVES ITS OWNER THE POWER TO RULE THE UNIVERSE! IF JANEWAY DOESN'T FIND IT FIRST, THE U.S.S. VOYAGER, ALONG WITH THE ENTIRE DELTA QUADRANT MAY BE DESTROYED!

ON SALE MARCH 12

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE® NO.7

HOWARD WEINSTEIN/TOM GRINDBERG

SISKO: ON TRIAL FOR CAUSING A GALACTIC CATASTROPHE! DAX AND O'BRIEN: ON A DESPERATE QUEST FOR INFO TO SAVE SISKO'S LIFE! THE MYSTERY CHARACTER: INTENT UPON MAKING SURE SISKO IS FOUND GUILTY! IT'S A RACE FOR LIFE AND DEATH IN PART TWO OF "RISK"!

ON SALE MARCH 19

STAR TREK®: STARFLEET ACADEMY™ NO.6

CHRIS COOPER/CHRIS RENAUD/ANDY LANNING

IT'S THE SAD, SAD FUNERAL OF KAMILAH GOLDSTEIN AND THE INTRODUCTION OF HER REPLACEMENT, EDAM ASTRUN! THE SQUAD RESENTS THIS INTRUSION, BUT THERE'S NO TIME FOR SQUABBLING BECAUSE A MINITURE BLACK HOLE STARTS SUCKING EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IN!

ON SALE MARCH 26

STAR TREK®: EARLY VOYAGES™ NO.4

DAN ABNETT & IAN EDGINTON/PATRICK ZIRCHER/ GREG ADAMS

THIS ISSUE TIES IN WITH THE CLASSIC PILOT EPISODE, "THE CAGE"! THE U.S.S. ENTERPRISE® ANSWERS A DISTRESS CALL ON TALOS 4 AND DISCOVER IT'S A TRAP! NOW THE TALOSIANS HAVE CAPTAIN PIKE IN A CAGE WITH LOVELY VINA, HOPING THEY'LL MATE! WHEN THAT DOESN'T WORK, THEY BRING IN NUMBER ONE AND YEOMAN COLT!

STAR TREK®: UNLIMITED NO.4

IAN EDGINTON & DAN ABNETT/MARK BUCKINGHAM & RON RANDALL/ KEV SUTHERLAND & AL WILLIAMSON

JOIN THE CREWS OF THE ORIGINAL U.S.S. ENTERPRISE® AND HER SUCCESSOR, THE ENTERPRISE-D IN TWO COMPLETE TALES OF INTERGALACTIC INTRIGUE AND ESPIONAGE. IN THE "ORIGINAL SERIES" STORY, SCOTTY JOINS STARFLEET SECURITY ON A COVERT MISSION TO RESCUE A CAPTURED FEDERATION STARSHIP, A SHIP WITH A SECRET! IN THE "NEXT GENERATION" STORY, HISTORY HAS A WAY OF REPEATING ITSELF AS THE ROMULANS KIDNAP GEORDI AND STARFLEET PROPULSION EXPERT DR. LEAH BRAHMS IN AN ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE AN EXPERIMENT WHICH BEGAN 100 YEARS AGO.

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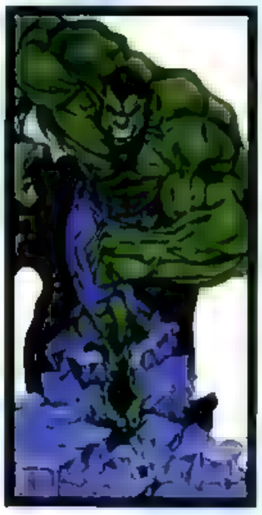

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X-MEN #25

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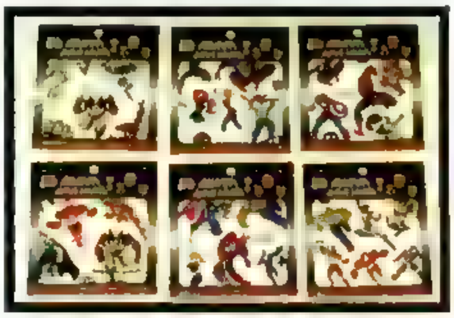

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